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LA DUCHESSE DU MAINE

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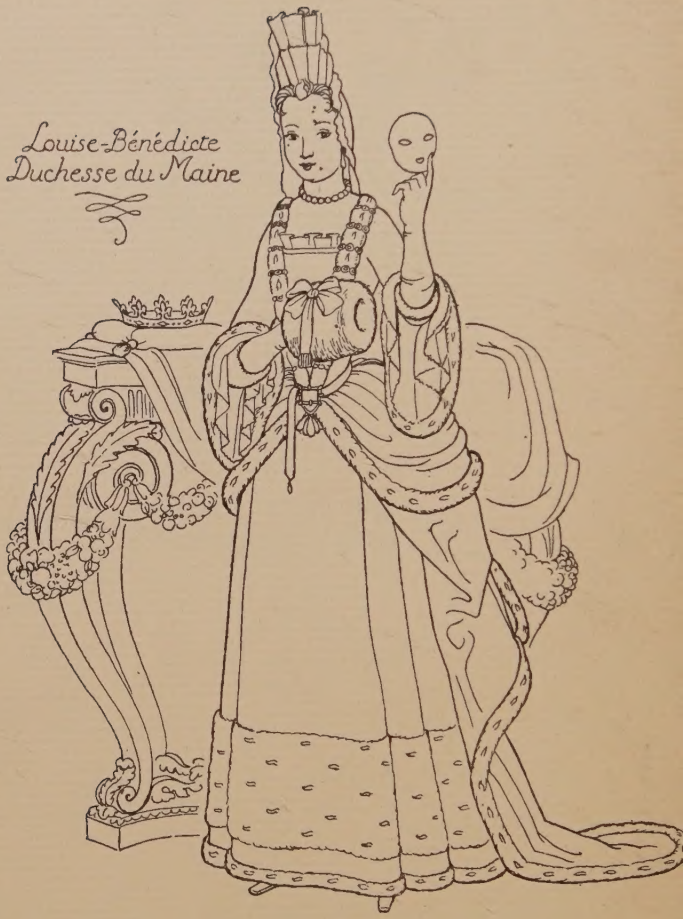

Louise-Bénédicte
Duchesse du Maine

16655

LA DUCHESSE DU MAINE

BY

FRANCIS BIRRELL

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(WITH EMOTION)

LA DUCHESSE DU MAINE

(1676—1753)

FRANCE IS FREQUENTLY PORTRAYED as the country of classic symmetry, of order, of accepted standards, of an amenity in some ways almost Greek, the land of Boileau as opposed to the land of Shakespeare. That there is an element of truth in this generalisation it were tedious to deny. But also (and in this lies the real fascination of the French epopee) it has been the land of disorder and convulsion. And it is a small partisan of disorder, a gadfly teasing the hinder parts of the classical spirit, who will be studied in the following essay. The spirit of the Duchesse du Maine is more important than the woman.

She had her one small moment of feverish activity on the death of her father-in-law, King Louis XIV, who has been found by many people to be the embodiment of the classical spirit in French politics, as his poets, painters and decorators were the embodiments of the classical spirit in art. Louis XIV, during his seventy-two years' reign, from 1643 to 1715, did for a period succeed in forcing on his unwilling contemporaries an order, a symmetry, even a modicum of good behaviour which they were far from enjoying. He came to reign amid a civil war—the famous struggles of the Fronde—in

which two opposing forces were for a moment welded in opposition to the great bourgeois monarchy which was coming to birth—the forces of the Paris mob which were to triumph on the 10th August, 1793, and of the half-independent princes and nobles, who finally flickered to a pantomime death in the Duchesse du Maine's fantastic conspiracy. Louis XIV was one of those people science has now made familiar to us, who are to an excessive degree affected by their childish experiences. The confusions of the Fronde, the moment when the mob burst into the Louvre and pulled aside the curtain to see if their child monarch were still in bed, his continual flights from Paris, his hunger, his squalour and his misery, bred in him a hatred of Paris and a hatred of the aristocracy, which were to keep him permanently out of touch with some of the greatest forces of his reign. The Duchesse du Maine was to represent in an uncomprehending way Paris and the aristocracy, the mob and the nobles.

The Fronde was a war in which women played a part in military operations which has remained unique in history. The Grande Mademoiselle, the Duchesse de Longueville, Madame de Chevreuse, are more characteristic figures than were the Condés, the Bouillons and the Turennes. There is a strangely boudoir atmosphere pervading the memoirs and the plots of the Cardinal de Retz. Hence Louis XIV, though, to do him credit, he always preferred the society of intelligent women, grew up with an intense dislike of women who meddled in politics; and one carries away the strong impression that for all the brilliant achievements of women during his reign, the age of Louis XIV was essentially anti-feminist.

The Duchesse du Maine asserted, against Louis XIV,

the rights of women to take an interest in matters of high politics and to mismanage them in their own particular way. Unfortunately her methods were as antiquated as her intelligence was slender. It was not by such intrigues as hers that women were to win back the ground that they had lost. Later in life she got on to a better line of operations. Absurd as was her salon, ridiculous as were most of her incense bearers, extravagant and ludicrous as were her parties, she was in her final stages not ineffective as a destroyer of caste, though she never understood what she was doing, and, had she understood, would have strongly disapproved. She brings out in clear relief the shortness of the time in which the Bourbons flourished. In a way she lived through a whole epoch, dating back in her traditions to the Fronde and to the real *ancien régime*, libertarian, anarchic and decentralised, and forward in her final friendships to the Revolution, Napoleonic, centralised and life-destroying, the France we know to-day. Her tiny size, even, becomes her as a microcosm. She is well worth our study, if we are not induced to take her too seriously.

Her conduct would in some ways appear less fantastic, not only to herself but to her contemporaries, than it does to us. We are so much taught to venerate patriotism that we conceive it to have been one of the earliest, rather than one of the latest European emotions. At the beginning of the reign of Louis XIV, France as a unity still played little part in the mental make-up of Frenchmen. Louis XIV felt it ; and though perhaps it was easy for him to feel this emotion, since he profited by it, we may nevertheless say that in this mystical experience he was

ahead of his time. Yet we may also think that all change is not necessary for the best, and that it would have been a good thing for all of us had Louis been less patriotic. The least patriotic persons in France, in the modern sense, were his immediate relatives, who considered themselves, with some historical justification, to be just as good as he was. The French monarch was never entirely to throw off his origins and become King of France purely, and the *premier chef féodal* not at all.

The history of France looks often like a war between the monarch and his relatives. In many ways the wars of religion had been wars of this nature : such had been the struggle between Henri IV and the Guises. For all the misery this cursed family brought upon France, we shall commit a sin of historical perspective if we dub the Guises merely treacherous. Even their most extreme action, their potential surrender of the throne of France to Philip II, would not appear as monstrous to their contemporaries as it does to us. When Elizabeth and Henri IV were allied against Phillip II and the Guises, English Protestants and Spanish Catholics painted the war in terms of the Eternal Verities. To many French protagonists, the struggle must have seemed a renewal of the Hundred Years' War, a struggle of knights, with no issues beyond those of feudalism and brigandage involved. Henri IV won as Louis XIV was to win, because he had some conception of France as a unit, and was willing to buy the noblesse out of their rights as independent princes, thus admitting the right while endeavouring to destroy it. Similarly, during the reign of his son Louis XIII, the royal family, led by his younger brother, Gaston d'Orléans, had headed the protest against the throne. Gaston was a

coward, and he always let down his friends; but he was hardly a traitor, and when Richelieu sent Montmorency to the block, that great nobleman in the eyes of many perished, not for conspiracy against the prince, but for defending the liberties of Langue d'Oc. When Louis XIII in turn died, and the prince was again an infant, the noblesse again asserted themselves in the Fronde, and the leading figure was the great Condé, the Duc de Bourbon-Condé, our heroine's grandfather.*

By the age of nineteen he had destroyed the Spanish army at Rocroi in Flanders, and become the most distinguished man of his generation. He was certainly headstrong, violent and intolerable; but, even with a gentler disposition, he could hardly have behaved otherwise than he did, because he was bound to find himself in opposition to the policy of the Court. Thus, when the Civil Wars once more broke out, he had either to obey sheepishly the orders of the prime minister, the Italian Mazarin, or choose the part of civil war. He naturally chose the latter part, but in so doing he did not forfeit the opinion of society. He was behaving only in the traditional manner when he was at last caught with an army in Paris. It was the king's first cousin, La Grande Mademoiselle, who opened the gates of the town and let him escape. Her conduct was not treacherous, hardly uncousinly. Even the king but half resented it. Nor was Condé's further escapade fatal when, pursuing the career of Alcibiades, he passed into the army of Spain and led foreign troops against his monarch. When Mazarin signed the famous treaty of the Pyrenees, and the king, sacrificing

* See the genealogical table, The Condé Family, on page 93.

love to politics, took a Spanish wife, the Condé became a diplomatic pawn. Certainly by this time Mazarin and Louis loathed Condé, but in exchange for the Infanta, they took him back. And they did more than take him back. He was once more in command of the army. And more than that, he was in command of the army against Spain. He appears to have felt no compunction in this matter, and no more did anyone else. He remained till the end almost an independent prince, who came to terms with one monarch after another, and did his duty by them, so long as in his opinion they kept their side of the bargain. He bears some resemblance to our own Warwick the King-Maker.

The history of France, then, even during the reign of Louis XIV, may be read in terms of personal vendetta, as it is pictured to us in the pages of Saint Simon. The final collapse of the Duchesse du Maine was caused by a clash between the elder and the younger branches of the House of Bourbon. The death of all save one of the monarch's great-grandsons had left but a weak baby between the head of the Orleans family and the throne of France. This was hateful to Louis XIV for family reasons; for his uncle, Gaston d'Orléans, was, as has already been observed, the enemy of his father. The ascent to the throne of the Duc d'Orléans, even his wielding of the regency, was an insult to the elder branch. It was against this insult that the Duchesse du Maine revolted. She espoused, as she considered, the cause of the elder branch. The Spaniards had raised the legitimisation of bastards to the status of dynastic rule. Louis XIV had done the same, and the Duc du Maine was in the right against the Orléans. The tradition died hard. When the

great-grandson of the Regent, that Duc d'Orléans known as Philippe Egalité, voted for the death of Louis XVI, he could claim for his conduct a family precedent, while when, after the Revolution of 1830, his own son Louis Philippe ascended the throne from which the elder branch had fled in the person of Charles X, many people including the last Duc de Condé, he was who strangled by his English mistress, Sophie Dawes, saw primarily not a political revolution, but the eventual triumph of the Orléans over the Bourbon family. The same quarrel, now more than two hundred years old, rendered a royalist reaction impossible after 1870.

As one reads the memoirs of the 17th century it is borne in on one that the protagonists of that century had less compunction than we have nowadays about doing what they wanted. In this sense political may have been acquired at the cost of personal liberty. With inability to express oneself thoroughly, the desire to do so has also vanished. Self-expression has become atrophied and boredom results. The Duchesse du Maine behaved in the traditional manner, but at the wrong time and in the wrong way. Let us see how she did it, bearing in mind the ideas in which she had been brought up, the conversation to which she had listened as a child. She was not utterly mad, merely rather foolish.

I

THE SEXUAL PERVERSITY of the Great Condé, M. le Prince, le Héros, symbolised by a famous catastrophe in the arms of Ninon de Lenclos, awaited a fitting chastisement till the second generation. Himself the most gallant, the most stalwart, and the hairiest of men, he was blest with but a degenerate offspring. Henri-Jules was maliciously named 'M. le Prince, tout court' to distinguish him from his illustrious and gigantic father. But he made up in disagreeableness what he lacked in inches. The fruitful Princesses of Germany have often been called in to reanimate the degenerate stock of more neurotic courts. Anne de Bavière, the wife of Henri-Jules, did nothing to restore the family to their primitive stature but contented herself with producing a large family of dwarfs, of whom Louise-Bénédicte, called Mlle de Charolais, the heroine of this volume, was the third daughter and the eighth child. She was born on the 8th of November, 1676.

The ill-tempered father ruled his Lilliputian offspring (his daughters became rapidly known as *Les Poupées de Sang*) with a querulous despotism that was a byword even in his day, and Louise-Bénédicte no doubt acquired from her life in the family mansions of Paris and Chantilly that complete absence of all natural affection which was to be so noticeable later. Certainly no one could expect her to like her father, and her mother, continually with child by a brutal and unfaithful husband, was a lachry-

mose companion for a lively girl, though it must be allowed that when Louise-Bénédicte got into serious trouble, her mother showed herself affectionate and hard working. The child must have been still further mortified by her ridiculous stature, for love of admiration was always to be one of her most marked characteristics. We know little enough of her early years, but we may gather their dreary import : months of neglect at home, alleviated by an occasional promenade with her brothers and sisters through the galleries of Versailles amid the sneers of courtiers, only too happy to work off on her their terror of her grandfather.

A brain of a kind, however, came to a casual sprouting in this unkempt garden of her life. For lack of better occupations she was thrown much among books, and devoured everything with equal facility and with equal credulity. She could see no difference, we are told later, between Descartes and her catechism. As was suitable for one of her distinguished birth, she must receive instruction from the greatest in the land, and no less an intellectual than La Bruyère was called in to direct the studies of Louise-Bénédicte. It is amusing to picture the morose author of *Les Caractères* trying to drive a little of his savage good sense into the head of his pupil, who was never to learn the meaning of *devoir* nor *bienséance*. But it is difficult to believe that La Bruyère had any influence on his charge. Her brain had no need of stimulus. Discipline rather was the corrective necessary, and she never showed any signs of having been disciplined.

If possible, a husband must be found for her, and Henri-Jules had long been looking round for a suitable

husband. Her brother had married Mlle de Nantes, the child of Louis XIV and Madame de Montespan, her elder sister had been lucky to catch a Conti, and early on Mlle de Charolais had been promised to another royal husband, the Comte de Vermandois, the child of Louis and Louise de la Vallière. This young hopeful unfortunately died when Louise-Bénédicte was but ten, and the affair had lapsed. But now Mme de Maintenon was also searching about for a suitable match for her beloved Duc du Maine, the eldest son of the King and the Montespan, whom she herself loved with a passion curiously maternal. She came to the conclusion that a Condé was the best possible match. Mlle de Charolais was the merest shade taller than her younger sister, and hence the choice lighted on her, and on the 19th of March, 1692, the Duc du Maine led to the altar the woman who was to make his own life a misery and to bring France to the verge of civil war. It was the extra half inch that did it.

Mme de Maintenon had passionately desired the marriage for reasons it is now difficult to ascertain ; she equally quickly repented, and wrote a characteristic letter to her friend Mme de Brunn full of that mixture of humbug and sincerity which makes her character so fascinating and so obscure.

'I have a bone to pick with you about Mme la Duchesse du Maine. You have misled me about her in the most important point—that of religion. She has no leanings to it, and wishes to be exactly like everybody else. I should not dare to say anything to a young princess, who has been most excellently brought up. I should not like to make a professional *dévote* of

her. But I confess I should much have liked to have seen her regular in her observances, and taking on an order of living which would be pleasing to God, the King and the Duc du Maine, who has enough good sense to want a wife who would be better behaved than some we might mention. I have given her a saint as lady-in-waiting ; but apparently she has no authority and does as she is bid. She is a child, and needs a governess more than a lady ; otherwise she is, as you say, pretty, good natured, high spirited and amusing, and above all very fond of her husband, who on his side is passionately in love with her, and would rather spoil her than cause her the least unhappiness. If I lose control of her, I wash my hands of the whole business, as this will show that it is impossible for the king to find anyone likely to turn out well in his own family. I admit I should have liked to have been tremendously fond of the Duchesse du Maine, who is what she is to the man who is the darling of my heart.

Versailles, August 27th, 1693.'

Unfortunately it was rather late to see the question with such dazzling clarity.

2

THE PROBLEM of the Royal Bastards was never absent from the mind of Louis XIV and never ceased to agitate the court. The King himself had said that royal bastards should never marry, but he was a man whose enormous sense of public duty was often at the mercy of his strong personal affection. His emotional nature on occasions led him even to choose his ministers unwisely, and he was still more unwise in his paternal tenderness. The influence of Madame de Maintenon, so over-estimated politically, was very powerful in their family life, and the whole weight of her diplomacy was devoted to pushing the King where he was only half willing to go. For she, too, was a person of deep emotional nature which was ill-controlled through having found no normal outlet. Neglected by her father, tyrannized over by her mother and married partly out of kindness by the crippled Scarron, she had after his death been brought to court to educate the large family of the King and Mme de Montespan. As a result, she showered forth on another woman's children all the stored-up passion of her nature. The Duc du Maine, the slightly deformed eldest boy of the family, was particularly her darling, whom she devoted herself to pushing along the paths of destiny without any thought of the future of the kingdom or indeed of his own personal happiness. For he was a lymphatic, studious, unambitious youth, who desired not at all to shine in the world and would have been

perfectly happy in the obscurity for which his father's good sense had originally designed him. He was evidently a man of limited intelligence and still more limited vitality, and it is strange to reflect that the children of two such magnificent creatures as Louis XIV and Mme de Montespan, tended as they were by so brilliant a woman and such a born governess as Mme de Maintenon, should all have come to so little. Perhaps some mysterious inferiority complex sapped their vitality early. Well disposed persons indeed found something of the *esprit des Mortemarts* present in the Duc du Maine, but we may be pardoned for supposing that, in this case, the wish was father to the thought.

Mme Arvède Barine has put forward the parodox that M. du Maine was far from the nonentity which historians have described. She evidently relies on a famous passage in Saint Simon, which is so sublime in its portraiture that it is difficult not to take it seriously or to see that, in a way, it contradicts itself. We can accept the artistic splendour of the general portrait, without accepting conclusions based on snobbery and hatred.

'With the mind I will not say of an angel, but of a devil, whom he greatly resembled in malignity, blackness, perversity of soul, and in his disobligingness to everybody, obligingness to no one, in his elaborate plans, in his most lofty arrogance, in his exquisite falseness, his numberless artifices, and measureless dissimulation, and also in his charm, in his power of amusing and diverting people, of charming when he wanted to please, he was an accomplished coward, both in mind and heart; and by the mere fact of this accomplishment he was the most dangerous

coward, one simply made, if it could be done secretly, to rush to the most dangerous extremities, in order to ward off approaching danger, and to use all that suppleness and cringing baseness, by which the devil loses nothing.

'He was also pushed along by a wife of the same stamp, whose mind—for she was as clever as possible—had been completely ruined by the reading of novels and plays to which she was so passionately attached that she passed years in learning them by heart and in acting them in public herself. She was courageous to excess, enterprising, bold and violent, knowing only the passions of the moment, and sacrificing everything to them, hating prudence and her husband's moderation, which she called a pitiful feebleness. She was always bringing up against him the honour she had done him in marrying him, thus making him small and supple beside herself, treating him like a nigger, and completely wrecking him, without his daring to protest. He put up with everything out of terror of her, for fear she might lose her reason. Though he hid a good deal from her, her ascendancy over him was incredible, and she drove him on ahead of her with a stick.'

The truth, I think, emerges through the contradictions.

Whenever Louis XIV did anything he did it handsomely, and there was nothing dingy about the marriage contract. The dowry of Mlle de Charolais amounted to eight hundred thousand francs. The King gave his son a million down, and, to the dislike of serious minded people, took a leading part in the marriage celebrations. The Duchesse du Maine, escaped from the family prison, might have been satisfied by her unexampled

good fortune, but, needless to say, she merely looked round for fresh fields to conquer. Her marriage was a starting-point, not a goal. She was the granddaughter of the great Condé, the hero of the Fronde, and conspiracies are fun even in Lilliput.

But the time for this is as yet not at hand. It was impossible to tell how far the Duke could be driven, and the succession was at present not in question. Louise had certainly made a marriage of ambition and proposed to get the last ounce out of it. It is difficult to believe that even at this moment she did not dream one day of reigning in Versailles. What hopes may she not have early whispered into the ear of her husband's governess? She certainly could not put up with her personally, but neither of them could ever forget that they had interests in common. One good service she in any case performed for Mme de Maintenon: she got rid of her mother-in-law. 'When Mme de Maintenon obtained from the king the disgrace of Mme de Montespan, the little duchess took her dismissal in hand, and M. de Meaux (Bossuet) *l'acheva*.' This strange service, said Saint Simon, gained for her for ever the affectionate and powerful patronage of Mme de Maintenon. The intrigue was perhaps squalid, but was devilishly subtle. The irreligious doll, whose conduct Mme de Maintenon had just been deploring, was called in to make the world safe for hypocrisy. To begin with, however, she must get herself a position and prepare herself for Versailles by shining in a smaller sphere. Her liveliness was soon too much for her husband, who early fled from her side to seek comparative respite at the wars. But he was as little gifted in arms as in marriage, and according to

Saint Simon, on July 14th, 1695, he allowed the army of the Prince de Vaudemont, a Lieutenant of the Prince of Orange, to escape under his eyes. A few days afterwards M. d'Elbœuf said to him before a number of other people : 'Where are you going to serve in the next campaign ? I want to be there, too.' 'Why ?' answered the Prince. 'Because with you, one is out of danger.' Saint Simon is, however, hardly to be trusted, for the Duc du Maine served with courage, though certainly not with talent. He was soon to abandon the wars ; if only he could have found a home under canvas he would have been a happier man. In other ways his affairs were looking up, for Louis XIV was weak enough to grant him, on the solicitations of his wife, an intermediate rank between the peerage and the princes of the blood. This was a fatal act which Louis spent just twenty years regretting. For he had shown that he could be bullied in his personal feelings. Mme de Maintenon and the Duchesse du Maine having once tasted blood were not likely to let go their prey.

This slight increase of dignity was, however, not enough. The Duke was still at the wars and the Duchesse sulked in Versailles, passing her lonely hours over books and absorbing any quantity of undigested information. But such a life rapidly became impossible, and the Duchesse looked round for a house of her own. It was difficult to find one suitable that was far enough without being too far away from court, of which she found the etiquette intolerable. She lighted temporarily on the house of one Nicolas de Malazieu, a former tutor of the Duke, one of those happy mortals who can do everything badly. They suited each other perfectly and

were to become inseparable. As Sainte-Beuve says, one can see that he was 'worthy to be at once the Molière, the Pythagoras and the Descartes of the Kingdom of Lilliput. . . . At ten miles from Paris one could say without a smile—the great Malazieu.' '*Il l'a dit*,' was always to be the last word with Mme du Maine.

In the pleasant village of Chatenay, with Malazieu purring soothingly at her side, Madame du Maine at last knew freedom and happiness. She rapidly developed her two most maddening characteristics, a passion for continual parties and a psychological inability to go to bed.

'The white nights' became rapidly famous, and we are told of their origin, through Rose de Launay, of whom we shall hear much more.

'Mme la Duchesse du Maine, who disliked going to bed, often passed all night at different games. The Abbé de Vanbrun, one of her most enthusiastic courtiers, had the idea that during one of these sleepless nights, someone should appear in the form of Night, enveloped in crepe, who would thank the princess for the preference she accorded to Night over Day ; the goddess should have an attendant, who would chant a beautiful air on the same subject. The abbé confided this secret to me, and made me compose and pronounce the harangue, which was to present the Goddess of Night. The only merit of this divertissement lay in its unexpectedness. The idea was applauded, and this was the origin of the magnificent fêtes arranged at night for the Duchesse du Maine.

All day long she indulged in her preposterous studies, and Malazieu was her Aristotle. All night long she gave theatrical entertainments, and the ineffable Malazieu was

now her Molière. For her ballets, like her science, were always second-rate. Her main interest, however, lay in the drama, and she seems to have organised these entertainments with considerable efficiency. Mme de Maintenon, no mean judge of the stage, writes in 1707 : 'Mme la Duchesse du Maine pleases everybody with her performances. Her troupe surpasses all the others. Such pleasures seem to me both more innocent and more witty than ruining one's self at lasquenet and destroying one's self with eating, drinking and smoking.' Seven years later she returns to the theme. '*Athalie* is being played to-day at Sceaux (which was her final home). Retired actors are playing with Mme du Maine. La Beaumel is Athalie, Baron is Nathan, M. de Malazieu the high priest, Mme du Maine Josabeth, the Comte d'Eu the little King.'

Saint Simon, on the other hand, who knew nothing about the theatre, and looked at everything from a purely political point of view, is of a very different opinion.

'She (the Duchesse de Bourgogne) also went to see the Duchesse du Maine, who spent more and more of her time acting with her servants and some retired actors. The whole court went there. But others could not understand why people should be mad enough to tire themselves out dressing up as actresses, learning and declaiming the longest parts, and making a public spectacle of themselves on the stage. M. du Maine, who did not dare contradict her for fear of her completely losing her reason, as he once explained quite openly to Madame la Princesse (de Condé) in the presence of Mme de Saint Simon, stood at the

corner of the door, welcoming the guests. Besides the absurdity, these pleasures were hardly cheap.'

Nor did the irritation of Saint Simon pass with the years. His exasperation grew to hysteria with the aggrandisement of the Maines. In 1714 we hear him shrieking:

'Sceaux was more than ever the scene of the follies of the Duchesse du Maine, her shame, her financial difficulties. Her husband was ruined by the immensity of her expenses, while the court and the town abandoned and laughed at her. She played *Athalie* there herself with the actors and actresses, as well as other plays several times a week. White nights, passed in lotteries, games, fêtes, illuminations, fireworks, in a word, fêtes and fantasies, of every kind every day. She gloated in the rapture of her new greatness, and her absurdities grew greater and greater, while the Duc du Maine, who always trembled in front of her, and further was afraid that the slightest contradiction might destroy her reason, tolerated it all.'

It would be a mistake, however, to regard these entertainments as an aimless frivolity. She was preparing herself for something better, for a better court, for better parties, for more expensive fireworks, for more numerous retainers. She always saw herself going upwards, though where she was to go or how exactly she was to get there, she was too flutter-brained seriously to enquire. For in her diminutive body she carried the energy of the Condés without the brains, and of all social pests such characters are the worst and often the most dangerous.

It had rapidly been obvious that Chatenay was not big enough, and happily Sceaux had fallen vacant, having been turned by Colbert and the Marquis du Seignelay into one of the most desirable residences in France. The dowry and the cash down had already disappeared. The Duc du Maine got more miserable as he got poorer and poorer, but he had quite ceased to count. Sceaux was at least half way between Chatenay and Versailles, and by 1699 the purchase was complete.

3

THE DATE was a grim one in the history of France. For the reign of the *Roi Soleil* was entering on its final and most disastrous phase. The hideous problem of the Spanish Succession, which for years had been hanging like a nightmare over Europe, was racing to its catastrophe. The dying William of Orange was putting the last touches in Hampton Court to the Grand Alliance. Marlborough and the Prince Eugene were straining at the leash to show the stuff of which they were made. The Edict of Nantes had been revoked fourteen years before, but Protestantism showed small signs of dying. Louis was to have his last fatal war forced upon him when he had lost all taste for martial exercises.

Thus amid the gloomy prognostications of all serious people, the Duchesse du Maine set up her latest court, surrounded by a preposterous order of gallants, *l'ordre de la mouche à miel*, after the device which these admirers wore, which was a honey bee, surrounded with an Italian legend, taken from the *Aminta* of Tasso :

> 'Piccola si, ma fa puo gravi feriti.'
> (She is small, but her sting is keen.)

People fought fiercely for the honour of admission, and

M. de Malazieu wrote one of his most exquisite lyrics on the subject :

'L'abeille, petit animal,
Fait de grandes blessures
Craignez son aiguillon fatal,
Evitez ses figures.
Fuyez, si vous pouvez, les traits
Qui partent de sa bouche
Elle pique et s'envole après,
C'est une fine mouche.'

On the whole, the Duchesse du Maine was more gifted than her court, with its preposterous academicians, Malazieu, the Abbé Gent, the Abbé de Polignac and a collection of other nonentities, who were never so happy as when dressed up as shepherds.

The War of the Spanish Succession has been brought forward by historians as the crowning folly of the Sun King's pride. It is in truth difficult to see how he could have well avoided it, and he certainly did not enter on it in a lighthearted mood. It may indeed be said that the whole of his reign was a vast diplomatic preparation for the crisis that was to become inevitable when the throne of Spain fell vacant.

When, in 1659, Mazarin had signed with the Spanish prime minister, Luis da Haro, the peace of the Pyrenees, he brought off a diplomatic coup of which Bismarck need not have been ashamed, but which was, like most diplomatic coups, full of omen for the future. The immediate advantage of the peace was getting the Spaniards out of France. But the peace possessed dangerous potentialities.

To signalise the new era the King of France married the daughter of Philip IV, Maria Theresa, who at the same moment renounced her succession rights to the Spanish throne for the sum of five hundred thousand gold crowns. This sum was not and never could be forthcoming, as both sides very well knew. The renunciation remained therefore hypothetical, and could be revoked at will. On the other hand, Philip had a son, Charles II, who would succeed to the throne, as well as several other daughters, so that the question might never arise. It is probable that Mazarin never conceived of the Queen of France becoming Queen of Spain, but everything was lapped in a veil of remote contingencies. And as the reign advanced, it became probable and finally certain that the Royal House would expire with Charles. How was the case to be met? It could hardly be met at all. William of Orange, far more of a militarist than Louis, and the most expert diplomatist in Europe, would certainly see to that. Louis went some way to meet him. Two succession treaties (one of which became invalid by the death of a co-heir to the Spanish dominions) were laboriously patched together, and still the King of Spain did not die; mummified and scrofulous, he lingered on in a state of death in the draughty passages of the Escurial, and by his final paralytic gesture he plunged Europe into war.

For he left a will. The Kings of Spain, unlike the Kings of France, were proprietors of the kingdom and could bequeath it to whom they would. By this will, the whole Empire of Spain was left to the French House in the person of the King's grandson the Duke of Anjou. If within a week he had not notified his acceptance, the

courier who had brought the news to Versailles would whirl away to Vienna and offer the crown to the Emperor. The Emperor would certainly accept it, with the cordial agreement of his cousin of England. An empire more powerful than that of Charles V would then spring into being and France would no longer exist as an independent country. The terrible union of Spain and Germany, the threat of which was to bring down Napoleon III, would become a living reality. Even so the king hesitated. For two days his council sat, debating as to whether or not they should refuse the will and throw themselves on the mercy of Europe. But at last the council decided it was better to trust to one's own strength, and the ascent to the Spanish throne of the Duke of Anjou as Philip V was announced to a court which had been hushed in expectancy. A curiously 17th century theology was added to diplomatic argument. To have refused the Spanish throne would have been deemed sin, a refusal of the burdens God had placed on the shoulders of his vicegerents. So began the last terrible war, which the monarch had on the whole done his best to avoid, and which was dictated by a dying asthmatic from the Dutch gardens of Kensington. But everything was working out beautifully for the heroine of this biography. Like all the Condés, she flourished best in the hour of disaster.

4

FRIVOLITY, IN NORMAL TIMES, is harmless, if a trifle irritating. In the hour of public disaster it can become actively offensive. The reign of Louis XIV has in it the elements of Æschylean tragedy—when gaiety gives way to grief, and glory to disaster, when the forces of fate descend with unprecedented violence on the darling of the gods. Amid scenes of general desolation, the daughter-in-law of Louis alone remained cheerful. Ramillies followed Blenheim, and Oudenarde Ramillies, the armies of the Grand Alliance camped on the soil of France, and the grandson of the King fled from his Spanish capital. The forces of nature joined in the battle, and tens of thousands of Frenchmen lay dead in their huts of cold and famine. But the Duchesse du Maine went on wasting her family fortune, indifferent not only to public disaster, but what is perhaps more excusable, to the death of her nearest relatives. If Louis is the hero of the trilogy, the Duchesse du Maine is the heroine of the satire which winds it off so cheerfully.

It would be too much to hope, perhaps, that she would find no consolation in some of the miseries of the time. Fate, which struck Louis in his public life, demanded also a private hecatomb. First died the Dauphin, then the Dauphin's eldest son, the Duke of Burgundy, then the Duke of Burgundy's younger brother, the Duke de Berri (a disaster which the Duchesse du Maine appears to have celebrated with a particularly brilliant party), and then his

two little sons, the two childish Dauphins. Except for the King of Spain, who under the Treaty of Utrecht had now abandoned all interest in the French crown, only one sickly baby, the last of the three, remained of the royal family.* No one expected him to live (though live he did to become Louis XV) and then the crown must pass normally to the Duke of Orleans, a man of infinite and cynical charm, who was popularly, though quite untruly, suspected to have been responsible for the prevailing mortality. Nevertheless, if the baby died, might not the legitimised bastards come truly into their own? Might not the Queen of Lilliput finally reign in Brobdidnag? Could not the shepherds dance their minuets amid the fireworks of Versailles? Sometimes it is extremely difficult not to rejoice in the death of one's relations. The deaths of a father and elder brother, which occurred at the same time, were hardly observed in the prevailing excitement.

The question of the succession, and the question of the bastards, hung like a nightmare over the King. By 1712 he was a wreck. His huge Bourbon appetite had left him, and he had become thin and shrunken and very old. The death of his son, grandsons and great-grandsons fell on him with dull reiteration, and there were always present the Duchesse du Maine and Mme de Maintenon brewing the witches' cauldron, lashing his hatred of the Orleans family, and trying to persuade him, the reformed and pious rake, to raise to unparalleled glory the fruits of his adulterous love. It was the final paradox of the reign that Louis, who thought his disasters came to him as a punishment for sin, should spend his last years endeavouring to place the crown of France on the child of sin.

* See the genealogical table, The Bourbon Line, on page 95.

Was not the morality of Mme de Maintenon almost equally peculiar? This leads to a general consideration—Has religion ever triumphed over personal passion? Does she not merely come into her own when her rivals are already dead?

Louis seems to have spent his three last years besieged by these two women screaming for their rights. His will became weaker and the measure of their triumph can be gauged from three Edicts. After the death of the Duc de Berri he decided that the sons of the Duc du Maine should have the same honours as their father. Then by an Edict of July, 1714, he decreed that they should inherit the crown if there were no legitimate princes to succeed.* Finally the King drew up a will, which was the final triumph for Louise-Bénédicte, who always took full credit for all these measures. By this act the King instituted a Council of Regency consisting of fourteen persons named therein and including the Duc du Maine and his brother the Comte de Toulouse. The Council would decide by a majority of votes, the Duke of Orleans being merely present as chairman. The guardianship and the education of the King would belong to the Duc du Maine, to whom the officers of the King's household would swear obedience. The Marshal Villeroi was to be governor of the King, under the orders of the Duc du Maine. It must be remembered that the Dauphin (who was to become Louis XV) was a sickly child of five, unlikely to live. At the moment of his death the Duc du Maine would be in command of the army, and it would be sheer incompetence if he could not divert the succes-

* See the genealogical table, Illegitimate Family of Louis XIV, on page 94.

sion to himself. The old King had now nothing to do but die. Everyone was sick of the reign. Mme de Maintenon was reasonable. The Duchesse was eager, the Duc indifferent, and the only person to show any feeling was the unfortunate Duke of Orleans. '*Dieu, venez moi en aide ; hâtez vous de me sécourir*,' were the last words of the expiring monarch.

On the 1st September, 1715, he finally died of gangrene, and the stage was set for the entry of the Duchesse into politics. Unfortunately for herself she had befriended a woman of genius, who has let us know in detail how she conceived her function of succeeding to the heritage of Louis XIV.

5

ROSE DE LAUNAY, afterwards Mme de Staël, had early seen her life's hopes blasted.

'There has happened to me,' she writes, 'the opposite to what one reads about in novels, where the heroine, who has been brought up as a simple shepherdess, turns out to be an illustrious princess. I was treated in my childhood as a person of distinction, and learned later that I was nothing and that nothing in the world belonged to me. My soul has never learnt that pliancy of temper, which ill fortune should teach. I have always struggled against the degradation and subjection in which I have found myself. Such has been the origin of my life's misery.'

Her father, for some unexplained reason, found it necessary to live in England, and the climate not suiting his wife, she returned to France where she bore her brilliant daughter. She was herself without means, but the precocious child passed a happy childhood, petted by benefactresses in various convents. She arrived at adolescence to realize that she was without a penny and that she had bestowed her heart unhappily and for ever on an unworthy object, the Marquis de Silly, the brother of a friend. Though apparently not pretty, she had a number of unselfish admirers, who unfortunately made no physical appeal to her but who generously offered her money, which she always refused, to relieve her of want. She was reduced to looking round for a place as governess

in some noble house, and while thus engaged, she ran into a sister. This sister had attached herself to an enthusiastic and addle-pated Duchesse de la Ferté, who was immediately overcome with admiration for the wit and accomplishments of Rose. She wished to have her always by her, but Rose, anxious not to make her sister jealous, steadfastly refused a permanent position in her household. However she was more than once taken to Sceaux, where she swiftly made the conquest of M. de Malazieu, who would not be satisfied till he had added her to the ' brilliant ' society that flitted round the Duchesse du Maine. She in turn was quite willing to take Rose, but would not do so without the consent of her friend the Duchesse de la Ferté, to whom the idea of such a separation was abhorrent. Rose de Launay therefore found herself (an action she regrets deeply in her memoirs) under the unpleasant necessity of wounding her protectress's feelings, till she should let her go of her own accord. Mme de la Ferté bore long with her whims, but perceiving she was bent on infidelity eventually let her go, but with a feline touch, recommended her as a lady's maid. Mme du Maine, who was very vague about the whole business, took her on as was suggested, and Rose de Launay arrived indeed at Sceaux at the end of 1711, but under very different circumstances from those of which she had dreamed. She was provided with a room in a basement so low and dark that she could not walk in it upright, where she could not breathe for lack of air, nor keep warm for lack of a chimney. She complained to M. de Malazieu, but got no answer. She had now become a servant, and the modern Pythagoras did not wish it to be known that he had once lost his head about her. She was herself so extremely

short-sighted that she could never find what her lady wanted, and she had never learned how to sew. The humiliation must have been intolerable, and, on the whole, Mme du Maine seems to have been patient with a very incompetent servant. Happily for herself, after about three years spent in those occupations she gained a reputation by a *jeu d'esprit* at the expense of Fontenelle, which commended her to her mistress, who, Rose de Launay admits, had always more respect for merit than had others of her rank. She too took pleasure in Mme du Maine's conversation, and she was able to write :

'This was the beginning of a life more agreeable in every way. Her Serene Highness condescended to speak to me and grew accustomed to doing so. She was pleased with my answers and counted on my good opinion. I often perceived that she sought for it, and that frequently when she spoke, her eyes turned towards me to see if I was attending. I gave all my attention to her and that without effort, for no one has ever talked with more exactness, clearness and rapidity. Her mind makes use of no turn or figure of speech. She is keenly struck by objects and returns them like the glass of a reflecting mirror, without addition, omission, or change. And so I had great pleasure in listening ; she perceived this and was grateful.'

Rose was even promoted to having a ballet arranged in her honour.

'The subject was Taste taking refuge at Sceaux and presiding over the diverse occupations of the Princess. First Taste brought on the Graces, who prepared a robe as they danced, while others sang airs provided with suit-

able words. This made up the first *intermède*. The second consisted in personified card games, who brought in card-tables, and set out everything that was necessary for play, the whole being diversified with songs and dances by the best actors from the opera. Finally the last *intermède* consisted of figures of laughter who came and set up a theatre in which was given a comedy in one act. This I was compelled to write, as they could find no poet (for it had to be in verse) who would accept such a subject. The subject was the discovery which the Duchesse du Maine asserted she had made of the Magic Square, to which she had been for some time applying herself with incredible ardour. The piece was played by her, everyone acting in their own character, which made it a success in spite of the dryness of the theme, and would have done me much good too, had not serious events suddenly interrupted the diversions and even destroyed the memory of them.'

Poor romantic Rose de Launay was to pay dearly for her affection for the Duchesse du Maine, as she paid dearly for everything. As she said, important events interrupted the life of the Duchesse. Her affairs had reached the crisis to which everything had been vaguely tending. Though the royal will had been drawn up in accordance with her wishes, she had never been able to find out what was in it (Louis refused her this crowning mercy) and this greatly handicapped her strategy. For one thing, she had to keep in with the Duke of Orleans until she knew how she stood, and scarcely had she found out what was in the will before the Parlement declared it inoperative and handed supreme power back to the Regent.

The Duchesse could hardly believe her ears. The cup

had no sooner been raised to her lips than it was snatched away and dashed to the ground. Nor could the matter have rested there. The *ducs et pairs* and the princes of the blood, having won the first round, would soon deprive the legitimised bastards of all their hard-gained victories. The Duchesse forgot in an instant all her ballets and dashed off to Paris to collect a faction, putting herself up in the Arsenal, where her husband had rooms as Grand Master of Artillery. Her situation was apparently not desperate. Orleans himself was difficulty placed. He, too, had married her sister-in-law, another bastard, though most unwillingly. Behind the Duchess were the relics of the old Court led by the Maréchal de Villeroi, a section of the Parlement headed by her old friend the First President de Mêsmes, to whom, with an eye to the future, she had always been friendly, and, it was thought, a number of provincial assemblies. So we see her deep in intrigue in Paris, surrounded by those flutter-brained or sinister Figaros who always rise to the top when times are troubled, and who are more common than anywhere in Paris, the city of revolutions. Her first difficulty was her husband, who said he asked nothing better than a '*lettre de cachet* dismissing him for five years to his estates.' We can imagine the terror Mme du Maine exercised over him. The next step of the Regent, exacerbated by Mme du Maine's nephew, the Duc de Condé, was to deprive the bastards of all the advantages gained by the special edicts and reduce them to that place in the peerage which was theirs through seniority. This was to be the final blow and Mme du Maine tried to avert it by erudition. A mass of literature now poured forth from the Duchess dealing with the historicity of bastards.

'Madame la Duchesse,' writes Rose de Launay, 'contributed herself a great deal to this work, not only by the light of her own intelligence, but by laborious researches. The greater part of every night was given up to it. Immense volumes piled up on her bed, like mountains under which she was crushed, made her look, she said, like Enceladus smothered under Etna. I assisted at this work, and so fingered old chronicles and ancient and modern jurisconsults, until excess of fatigue disposed the princess to take a little rest. I had to read aloud to her to induce slumber after which I went off to try and sleep myself, in which I was not very successful. The desire to enrich this work with everything that could make it more weighty necessitated collecting from everywhere authorities favourable to the cause. Thousands of obscure people offered the advantages of their scholarship and handed in their tiny discoveries. The greater number were sent away or at least told to address themselves to me. One among others noted for his great learning (it was the elder Boivin, more Hebrew than French, who knew more about the customs of the Chaldeans than about those of his own day, and who knew about no other court than that of Semiramis) asked to be introduced to ours with his ancient treasures, which were pretty useless for the present business. Examples taken from the family of Nimrod would have been scarcely conclusive for that of Louis XIV.'

Still he was admitted. Then after the *savantasses* came the crystal gazers.

'I only carried away from Madame du Puy (for this was her name) the conviction that she would be completely useless. Our people returned to the charge and said that she

would speak at table like the Pythian on her tripod. The intrigues had but one object—a few free meals. I was condemned to sup with this troop of brigands. I was led into a tennis court, the scene of the feast, which was half in ruins. I passed along sombre alleys and crossed water visible through the planks I walked on. These ghastly passages filled me with alarming thoughts. Perhaps I was being taken to a witches' sabbath : perhaps I should find a den of cut-throats or even worse. The assembly, once I had joined it, did not reassure me. It appeared made up of people apt for such mysteries. The songs that enlivened the repast seemed quite in keeping also. The wine Mme du Puy drank there caused her to reveal nothing of her deep mysteries. She reappeared amongst us again with her ambiguous discourses, which admitted of no explanation. She was very likely a spy—however that may be, her efforts ended in nothing. I only mention this because it was cited among the authentic pieces of our great *affaire*.'

The memoir on the legitimised princes was, we are assured, well composed and written. It was also completely useless. The case was lost in advance, and Madame du Maine was reduced to the desperate necessity of conspiring against the State.

6

THE DEATH OF Louis XIV not only left the succession doubtful but threw all politics into the melting pot. Further than this, the 18th century, which the old King had kept back, now came in on the flood. The elaborate concatenation of circumstances and tendencies makes the period of the Regency one of the most exciting in the history of France. The restoration of the Duke of Orleans to the Regency meant, in fact, the triumph of 'new ideas,' the entrance of the 18th century into politics. This truth, no doubt, as well as family affection and family hatred, had induced Louis to try to keep him from power. The Regent arrived with a new policy and new methods.

The War of the Spanish Succession had as its purpose the placing of a Bourbon on the throne of Spain, and the Treaty of Utrecht had in part recognized this claim, though Philip V reigned over a shrunken empire. The legacy of the war was hatred of England, which it was the policy of the Regent and his minister Dubois to mitigate. Unfortunately peace with England meant an agreement with the Empire, and this entailed in turn an estrangement from Spain. For it happened that the Spanish Prime Minister, Alberoni, an Italian adventurer with some vague dream of a united Italy, was planning a war on Austria, whose friendship George I, intent on the aggrandisement of his Hanoverian estates, was anxious to acquire. The enemies of the French ministry thus unfortunately became the friends of the Spanish Alliance, which had cost so much blood and treasure that the Regent regretfully

abandoned it. Nor had Philip V entirely given up hopes, in spite of every promise, of reigning in Versailles should Louis XV die. Philip in turn would hand over the throne of Spain to one of his sons. In the meanwhile, he would be well-advised to increase his hold on France against the moment of the child-King's eagerly awaited death. This he would do by means of the Conservative party whose leader was nominally the Duc, but really the Duchesse du Maine. Orleans would be banished if not killed, the States-General would be summoned, the Duc du Maine made Governor of France ; and then—well perhaps it was not quite decided whether when Louis XV did die, the King of Spain or the Duchesse du Maine would come to the throne. Here was obviously room for a final quarrel. But the future could take care of itself.

Such was the outline of the crack-brained plot which in its final form became known as the Conspiracy of Cellamare, after the Spanish Ambassador in Paris, and into which Mme du Maine and her unfortunate husband blindly threw themselves. Apart from its general absurdity, the scheme had one fatal flaw. Such a domestic arrangement could not, in modern parlance, have been 'localized.' It would have amounted to a breach of all the conditions of the Treaty of Utrecht, would have brought once more into being the 'grand coalition' and put France back to the state in which she found herself in 1709, and from which she was now being rescued by the wise policy of the Regent and his ministers. It was an enterprise as criminal as it was frivolous. But it had all the fun of private theatricals, and afforded the Duchesse the public scene to which she had aspired so long.

The atmosphere of the age suited her schemes. The

government was now in the hands of the 18th century, and the Duchesse, though she found herself the supporter of the old order, was as 18th century as anybody. The Regent, a man of many delightful characteristics and of great intelligence, was too unstable, sceptical and lazy to devote himself for long at a time seriously to politics. Alberoni, who, having gone to Spain as a follower of Vendôme, had wormed himself into the confidence of Philip V and arranged the second marriage with Elizabeth Farnese, had subsequently become her lover, and was now setting Europe by the ears. He had all the cunning and lacked only the gravity of statesmanship. As for George I, well, he was certainly not frivolous, but he had come to govern a serious country and was in his own way, and curiously enough—for he had never learnt a word of the language—an English way, as 18th century as anybody.

The Duchesse found the situation suited for her hand, and might have played her cards adequately had the Regent not possessed two ministers, who, though 18th century enough, were also real statesmen, the supple and imaginative Dubois, and the energetic Voyer d'Argenson, the chief of police. Into this dedal of intrigues the Duchesse whirled with light-hearted enthusiasm. She must have dreamed herself back in the Fronde, but somehow times were changed. She had unfortunately come on the scene at the exact moment when modern history begins. The Grande Mademoiselle and the Duchesse de Chevreuse, the heroines of her grandfather's youth, were hopelessly out of date, though she can hardly be blamed for not realizing it. Unfortunately too the Prime Minister, as we may call him, the Abbé Dubois, was as cunning as a policeman as he was enlightened as a diplomat.

'He was,' writes Saint Simon, 'a thin little man, lean, wizened, with a fair wig, a face like a polecat and a clever expression. All the vices fought in him to see which should be the master. They were always fighting and quarrelling together. Avarice, debauchery and ambition were his gods, perfidy, flattery and servility his methods, a complete impiety his comfort. The assumption that probity and honour were delusions to be made use of, being qualities which no one possesses, was the basis of his conduct, and hence all means were alike to him. He excelled in low intrigue, lived on it, could not get along without it, but his actions tended always towards a fixed object, with a patience that was content with nothing but success, or at any rate, only with the reiterated proof that his object was unattainable; though indeed in the darkness, he might see daylight best by opening another trench. Thus he passed all his days sapping. He could tell the boldest lie with the simplest air, straightforward, sincere, often modest. His speech might have been graceful and easy. But he desired always to see into others while he spoke, and the fear of advancing further than he wished had accustomed him to an artificial stammer, which seized hold of him, and growing stronger when he was dealing with important business, became intolerable and sometimes unintelligible. Except for his twists and insincerities, which pierced through every precaution, his conversation would have been attractive. He was intelligent, well-read in literature and history, a man of the world, full of the desire to please and insinuate; but all was spoilt by a smoke of falsity, which exuded, despite himself, from every pore, till even his gaiety became depressing.'

Saint Simon hated Dubois on other grounds, and no doubt exaggerated. His private correspondence with the Regent shows him to have had spontaneous and attractive qualities. But what chance had the Duchesse, who for all her intrigues was as open as the day, with such a spider? It is not surprising that a good many people thought Dubois had invented the whole conspiracy himself. He certainly encouraged it for his own ends, when he could easily have stopped it.

7

STILL, the situation was not easy for the Regent. He suffered from being cast for the rôle of a man of destiny without having the energy for the part. He saw exactly what ought to be done, and was quite unable to do it. And herein he again was the progenitor of the 18th century, which always saw what ought to be done and could never do it, and eventually allowed the French Revolution to do it all wrong. The unpopularity which soon fell upon the Regent was in exact proportion to the high hopes and enthusiasm which had greeted his accession to power. The peace policy was indeed popular. But what about the taxes? What about the position of the aristocracy? What about the States-General, which seemed to be coming to the surface again? What about the British Constitution, which everybody loved and no one understood? What about the Catholic Church? What about the Protestants? What about the Jansenists? What, in fact, about the 18th century? There was but one answer to all this—Law's Scheme.

John Law was an absolutely honest Scotchman with a touch of genius, who 'had a scheme.' Incidentally it was a scheme that would benefit everybody and hurt no one. He had studied the starting of the Bank of England and the workings of the Amsterdam Bank. This had filled him with the idea of working with credit. His idea was to take over the National Debt and obtain a monopoly for his own private bank for the exploitation of the Mississippi.

Gradually indeed he was to own the whole finances of the State and issue paper money against the potential wealth of America. The paper money thus put into circulation would stimulate industry. Unhappily, though there was an idea at the back of his mind, the shares soared up to Heaven and then crashed, while the Royal Family, who had heard of what was happening, sold out and pocketed millions. Thousands of investors were ruined, the Government was discredited, and Law fled. It was the Regent's sole contribution to the Government of the country. He had backed Law against all advisers, and paid the penalty.

The Duchesse du Maine's achievement was of a negative order. She had abstained from investing in the Mississippi scheme. She was too extravagant to care about money, but she gained great, if undeserved, credit for her probity. The Duc du Maine had a large number of friends whom he might have utilized had he had more energy and a different wife. The summoning of the States-General, which was on the Liberal even more than on the Conservative programme, seemed all the more necessary as a result of the Stock Exchange crash. A skilful intriguer might have done something, but the Duchesse was to muff it all.

It is difficult to deduce how clear any of the conspirators were as to exactly what they intended to do. Cellamare always denied that he had intended to depose, still less to make away with, the Regent. But there seems little doubt that a rising in Paris and in Brittany, the deposition of the Regent, the summoning of the States-General, the undoing of everything accomplished since the death of Louis XIV, and a proclamation by the King of Spain, formed an integral part of the scheme. The Duchesse gathered round her a preposterous cabinet, of which two

perfectly incompetent people called Laval and Pompadour were the heads. She also entrusted with a communication to the King of Spain an adventurer from Liège called de Walef, who certainly went to Spain, but afterwards went into the Imperial States in Italy with whom Spain was at war. The Government were very soon aware of the general lines of the conspiracy, and it is thought that the Regent himself was occasionally present in disguise at the secret conclaves of the conspirators.

The Duc du Maine and the bastards had been further wounded in their prerogatives, and the Duchesse now became desperate. Rose de Launay was entrusted with the secret correspondence ; unluckily she dispenses herself from describing the details of the conspiracy because she says there was no sense in it. Certainly there was no sense in the way in which the collaborators were chosen. As secretary of the Duchess the Abbé Brigault needed someone to help him translate into Spanish many of the most compromising documents connected with the conspiracy, including a long report by Cellamare. To assist him in this task, he could not do better than hire the services of an employee in the Royal Library, who was terrified when he discovered what he was being mixed up in. He went and reported the matter to de la Houssaye, the secretary of Dubois, who told him to remember his patriotism and gave him an interview with the minister. Dubois pretended to pooh-pooh the whole affair, but advised him to continue his work, and to report each morning what he had copied out overnight.

The time arrived, however, when the conspiracy had to come to a head. A young diplomat, the Abbé Porto-Carrero, was sent as courier from Cellamare to

Madrid. He was given, unknown to himself, the details of the conspiracy, with a list of the conspirators, which were not even in cypher. These were put into a false bottom to his carriage, and he set out on a route arranged in advance by the west of France and the Pyrenees. He went peacefully on his way, followed by a single servant and accompanied by one Montaleone, the son of the Spanish Ambassador in London, and a Chevalier de Mira, also domiciled in England, who was wanted by the police on a charge of fraudulent bankruptcy. They might have arrived in safety but for a characteristic misadventure.

A secretary of the Embassy, who had been working on the Porto-Carrero documents, was late for an appointment *chez* La Fillon, who kept a well-known disorderly house. In the desire to add to his grandeur by magnifying his office, he remarked pompously that he had been delayed owing to the great length of some very important documents which had to go off to Spain that night by a secret courier. He said this with such an air of pretentious self-importance, that La Fillon went careering off with the news to Cardinal Dubois, who was also curiously enough a patron of the same elegant establishment. Dubois, already suspicious about the departure of these three gentlemen, sent after them post haste with orders to arrest them and take all their papers. They were arrested at Poitiers and brought ignominiously back to Paris. Cellamare was, however, lucky in one thing. A postilion who was badly mounted had fallen behind Porto-Carrero. At Angers he crossed the ordinary post from Poitiers to Paris. 'Any news?' he cried. 'No, only an English bankrupt has been arrested at Poitiers, and a Spanish Abbé with

important papers.' The postilion, realizing what had happened, turned rapidly round, hired a fresh horse and flew back to Paris, passing on his way the emissaries of the Government. He was able to warn Cellamare of the disaster twelve hours before Dubois, at last in possession of the desired information, could put the police into the Spanish Embassy. La Fillon was given thirty thousand livres down and twelve thousand livres a year, became a countess, and died in the odour of sanctity. Such was the lamentable end to the Duchesse du Maine's adventure into politics. The alliance between the Fronde and the 18th century had resulted in fiasco.

8

THE DUCHESSE WAS unaware of the catastrophe. She was in fact in very good spirits. True, Malazieu had mislaid one extremely inconvenient document, and the whole of Sceaux had been turned upside down looking for it (the police eventually found it in his writing table under his son's marriage contract), but little misfortunes of that kind were bound to occur and the matter was dismissed from her mind. Could she have known the apathy of the Regent, she would have felt still calmer. The behaviour of everybody was so extremely 18th century. The courier, with the bag of captured documents, arrived at Dubois' house just as the Regent was going to the opera. After it was over, the minister, who had been through the papers, came and informed the Regent in his box. 'No serious business till to-morrow,' was the reply, and Orleans went to pass the evening with his *roués*. Cellamare had thus twelve hours to burn his papers, but he, too, was a conspirator of comedy, and could think of nothing better than to go and demand the dispatches back from Dubois. Dubois expressed himself willing, and so charmed Cellamare with his friendliness that Cellamare omitted to destroy either the papers dealing with the conspiracy or his whole correspondence with Alberoni, which were soon at the Louvre.

Here is the insensate document of which the rough copy was to be found in Malazieu's writing desk. It purports to be written to Louis XV by the King of Spain :

'Brother and Nephew,

Since Providence placed me on the throne of Spain, I have never forgotten for an instant the obligations of my birth. Louis XIV of eternal memory is ever present in my mind. I continually seem to be hearing that great prince saying to me as he embraced me at the moment of separation, "There are no longer any Pyrenees."

Your Majesty is the only child of my elder brother.

My dear Spaniards who love me tenderly, and who are sure of the love I bear them, are in no way jealous of my feeling for you. I flatter myself that my personal interests are still clear to a nation who nourished me in their breast. With what feelings then can your faithful subjects regard the treaty which is being signed against me, or rather against yourself? Ever since your exhausted finances have prevented you from meeting the everyday expenses of peace, your Majesty has been desired to unite with my bitterest enemy and declare war on me, if I could not agree to give up Sicily to the Archduke. I will never subscribe to these conditions. They are intolerable.'

This terrible letter undid the conspiracy. But to make everything sure, another letter from Cellamare to Alberoni proved that the Maines were at the head of the conspiracy and that the King of Spain had given them money for the purchase of agents. These agents admitted that they had been presented to the Duchesse by the Ambassador. She was convicted of high treason up to the hilt. We must apply again to Rose de Launay for the absurdity of the final crash :

'Finally we learnt that the papers carried by the Abbé

Porto-Carrero had been taken and that those of the Ambassador, who was also arrested on this occasion, were likewise seized. We then saw ourselves plunged into an abyss, from which there was no means of escape. The next morning we learnt that the Marquis de Pompadour and de Saint Geniès were in the Bastille. Two days later, the Duchesse was playing biribi as usual (she took good care not to alter her way of life). A M. de Châtillon, who was keeping the bank, a reserved man who rarely spoke, said : " There is really a very good piece of news. They have arrested and put in the Bastille, over this affair of the Spanish Ambassador, a certain Abbé Bri—Bri——." He could not read the name ; those who could had no wish to help him. At length he went on : " And the amusing thing is he has blurted out everything and heaps of people find themselves in a terrible fix." And he burst into a fit of laughter for the first time in his life.

' The Duchesse du Maine, who had no desire to imitate him, observed, " Very amusing, certainly ! " " It's enough to make you die of laughing," he continued. " Imagine all these people, who thought their affairs a complete secret, and then somebody tells more than he is asked and gives everybody away by name." This last announcement was the final and unexpected blow to the Duchesse. For the Comte de Laval had assured her that Abbé Brigault had escaped and that the measures taken were so satisfactory that there was nothing to fear. She continued her painful conversation with M. de Châtillon till the end, without showing any sign of her feelings. She repeated everything to me at night when I was with her again, and exhibited the alarm she felt and which I could not dissipate, being myself only too certain of the wretched

fate which awaited her. Every day somebody was arrested, and we had only to wait our turn.'

But they had to wait some little time. The Duchesse had treated the Regent abominably, but he showed himself her best friend. Ministers clamoured for strong measures. Saint Simon howled for vengeance. Her nephew, M. le Duc, loathed the very sight of her. The Duc du Maine saw his head already off his shoulders. 'It was your fault,' he muttered feebly to his wife. But the Regent seemed unable to take the conspiring shepherdess seriously.

'Depressed as I am,' writes the Regent's mother, the Princess Palatine, to her relations in Germany, 'my son has made me yell with laughter by describing what he has found in the letters of the Duchesse du Maine, which are among the papers of the Cardinal de Polignac. In one of these letters this respectable, virtuous woman observes: "We are going into the country to-morrow, I shall arrange the rooms in such a way that yours is near mine. Try to do as well as you did last time, and we shall enjoy ourselves thoroughly."'

Really the conspiracy was almost worth while if it enabled one to pretend, for purposes of conversation, that one's quite respectable little step-daughter-in-law had sinned with a cardinal.

In fact, the affair lingered so long that the Duchesse actually ventured on an interview with the Regent, whose manner was, however, distinctly chilly. There can be little doubt that he would have let off the Maines if he

could, but the ferocity of the Council finally won the day. The Duc du Maine was arrested at Sceaux on the 29th December, and an unknown messenger arrived at the Duchesse's 'bureau' in Paris to warn Rose de Launay of her impending fate. Rose de Launay is inaccurate on points of date, but the character sketch of everyone is too good to be misleading.

'I immediately went to find the Princess and told her my news. . . . She was so little troubled that she made a number of jokes on the subject, in which everyone joined, and the agitating night passed very gaily. I took up a book which I found by my side to induce her to sleep: it was the *Decades of Macchiavelli*, marked at the chapter *Conspiracies*. She showed it to me and said with a laugh: 'Remark this piece of evidence against us. It will be one of the worst." At ten o'clock the next morning the Duchesse was arrested.'

The Duc du Maine was meanwhile led off weeping to prison at Doullens. There was a general round-up. Polignac was exiled to Flanders. The two sons of the Duchesse were sent into the country and the daughter into a convent. Rose and Malazieu went to the Bastille, followed by a host of minor personages. What was the fate reserved for Louise-Bénédicte? She was, on the whole, fairly cheerful about the prospects. 'God Almighty,' remarked the old Maréchale de Meilleraye, 'thinks twice before damning a woman of quality.' Certainly former French ministers had behaved with becoming modesty towards rebellious princesses of the blood. Random recollections of Mme de Chevreuse, Mme de Ventadour and

La Grande Mademoiselle floated through her mind as she awaited the arrival of the police. Her dignified outburst showed the nature of her preoccupations.

'"You see before you," she cried, the granddaughter of the great Condé. I feel I am no degenerate descendant. Crushed? Never! Why am I not a man?" Then she added in a softer tone, "The Duke of Orleans thinks I hate him. Had he been willing to listen to my opinion, my advice would have been better than anyone's."'

9

IN THIS TRAGI-COMIC SCENE the 17th century seems going out with a sigh. All her subsequent adventures were to show how times had changed She was not told whither she was going, but an extremely comfortable suite at Fontainebleau was the worst fate she had anticipated. Certainly it was monstrous that she went in a hired carriage, accompanied by two lady's maids, she 'who thought herself alone when she was not in a crowd.' The uproar was terrific, but she might have been grateful to the Regent if she had known the rage of the Council at the leniency of the treatment.

'One might have thought,' we are told, 'that she was a *fille de France*, who through unreasonable and unjustified hatred was being treated with the last indignity. This heroine of a novel, stuffed with stage plays which she had herself been acting for twenty years at Sceaux, could only speak in theatrical language. The strongest epithets were not, to her taste, strong enough, to describe the supposed justice of her complaints. They burst out again with redoubled violence when she at last learned after three days that she was being taken to Dijon. The discovering and upsetting of her plans, the insult she felt she had experienced by being arrested, all the intolerable circumstances entailed by her captivity and of which she had not ceased to complain furiously, these were all nothing beside seeing herself taken to the fortress of M. le Duc's capital, where he was complete master. She

spat out against the court all the insults which her long-continuing fury could suggest. She forgot she was the sister of the Duc's father. She did not spare their common birth, and enjoyed making insinuations about his son, aged thirteen months. She pretended to be ill, changed her carriage, stopped at Auxerre, and everywhere she could in the hope that Mme la Princesse [her mother] could get her destination changed, and perhaps also that her guards would be terrified by her transports. In fact, Mme la Princesse did so much importune the Duke of Orleans that he sent her three servants, and Mme de Chambonnas, her lady-in-waiting, obtained permission to go and shut herself up with her, then her doctor also and another maid-of-honour. But no change was admitted about Dijon. All this considerateness went for nothing. The Duke of Orleans must have known it would be so but he was always deplorably weak.'

Certainly Saint Simon was unduly hard on the theatre, and some may think that the Duchesse kept her end up rather well under very trying circumstances. But the romantic revival was still a long way off, and she would hardly appreciate the beauty of her prison. If you were not interested in Gothic architecture, residence in the château of Dijon would be the reverse of attractive. Unfortunately it no longer exists, but we can gather how uncomfortable it must have been—a great square building, with four large towers at each corner. Large moats surrounded the whole edifice. Louis XI had constructed the building on uniting Burgundy to the crown. Transformed into a State prison after the Fronde, it had served as a place of detention for two Huguenots in 1659, and since then no

State prisoners had been there till the Duchesse arrived on the 13th of January, 1719. It is difficult to conceive anything more uncomfortable or humiliating. Even to-day it is painful to think how cold it must have been on the 13th of January. Some rooms had been hurriedly arranged in the wing of the château which gave on to the town. We are informed, and can well believe, that the surprise of the population was considerable on learning that the mysterious personage who had just arrived there with a considerable escort was a woman and the aunt of the Governor. As a crowning humiliation she could reflect that her glorious ancestor, the great Condé, had besieged the château during the Fronde. Her life was full of these irritating little historical morals.

'Ami, te souviens—tu qu'en route pour Cologne
Un dimanche, à Dijon, au cœur de la Bourgogne
Nous allions, admirant portails, clochers et tours
Et les vieilles maisons dans les arrière-cours?'

The gentle melancholy of Sainte-Beuve could mean nothing to Mme du Maine—and then Sainte-Beuve was on the way to Cologne, the spiritual home of all Frondian protagonists, and from which Mazarin had ruled France for years. Perhaps even Sainte-Beuve would have disliked Dijon had he been compelled to stay there.

She had every reason to be horrified at her treatment, and to feel the indignity of being more or less under the guardianship of her nephew, M. le Duc. The splendour of being a State prisoner appeared somehow to have evaporated. The Secretary of State wrote to the Governor of the prison that 'she must have no communication with anyone either by writing or by word of mouth.' The

principal apartment of the château should be put at her disposition, and would be suitably furnished without her being consulted. Three men-servants of the Duchesse, who were allowed to accompany her on her journey, were refused entrance to the château. Mass is a great time for conspiring, so the architect was ordered to construct a tribune in the chapel, where the Duchesse and her maid-servants could assist at divine service without being able to speak to anybody. On the 16th January a box of books and knick-knacks was dispatched from Paris, but everything was examined on arrival. She must not be allowed enough money to be able to corrupt anyone. She may read the emptily official *Gazette de Paris*, not the *Gazette de Hollande*, which might have contained something interesting. Her own doctor may visit her, but he must be given neither letters nor papers : similarly the dentist, who must leave the moment his work is done. The Duchesse may write to her mother when she wishes, but only in the presence of the Governor, and the Regent must receive a copy of the letters. The lady's maids may only write in the presence of witnesses.

Certainly the treatment of conspirators had fallen off. Killing high treason by boredom was the order of the day. An attempt to get herself carried off by a M. d'Affry having come to nothing, the Duchesse du Maine had to confess herself beaten. The Regent in fact held all the cards. As long as she took up a high line, she would remain in a tiresome and ridiculous custody. On the other hand, if she could be induced to adopt the humble note, she would instantly lose her prestige and would be a social danger no longer. He let this be clearly understood.

IO

THE TREATMENT soon began to work. The granddaughter of the Great Condé was on the broad road to degeneration. Though the process was to be a long one, she was allowed after five months whining to move from Dijon to Chalon-sur-Saône early in May, 1719. Here the surveillance was a trifle relaxed, and she was allowed to drive out in a carriage. 'Monsieur must judge of my pains by my pleasures,' she wrote. These pleasures consisted in looking after a pet donkey, a touching incident which Voltaire subsequently commemorated in two uninspired lines :

'Dans ces murs malheureux, votre voix enchantée
Ne put jamais charmer qu'un âne et les échos.'

In the Bastille Rose de Launay was filling in her ample leisure examining the habits of a cat which kittened in her room.

Fury had now given way to grief. Mme du Maine wept incessantly, was thought to be very ill, and even dead. Her intrigues became feebler and feebler, and not even the Government could take them seriously. So in August, 1719, she was moved again to Savigny and then again to Champly, the treatment each time growing milder and milder. There was a fiendish psychology behind all this. Her spirit being broken, she was granted a half liberty, which made her all the more anxious for the whole, that whole which could be obtained by frank confession.

Early in December she heard from her mother that Malazieu and Laval had confessed, and on the 3rd of December she herself wrote a dignified letter to the Regent, announcing that she was shortly going to confess everything.

'I swear to you before God, my Lord, that from the very first moment of my misfortune I meant to confess to you and to throw myself completely on your mercy. I wished to write to you on first arriving at Dijon, but M. Desgranges would not consent. He said that he had not got the necessary permission. I was quite ready to give you such explanations as you wished and in the manner you might be pleased to order. I flatter myself that I have forgotten nothing of importance. If you are left with the least feeling of doubt about anything, I implore you to let me know. You will see by my answer that I am acting in all sincerity and you will be perfectly satisfied in every way. I have complete confidence in the promise M. de la Billarderie has given me from you that you will pardon those who embarked on this unhappy escapade, and that you will let me go back to Sceaux. You will have no reason to repent of your kindness to me. I shall have no other care but to be worthy of it, and to repair my faults by my devotion and good conduct. I pray you to be completely secret about all this. This is a favour which I implore you to accord me. . . .'

On the 14th of December then the confession is finally sent with a covering letter :

'I am sending you through M. de la Billarderie a very full and very sincere confession. I can assure you that my self-examination has been most vigorous, and I

could not have bestowed on it more attention had I been confessing to God Himself. I have sought neither to conceal nor to deny my faults, as I am of opinion that the more sincerely I confess them, the more you will be disposed to pardon me. Pray be good enough to accord me that absolution which you have been so kind as to promise me. My punishment has been severe and long, and I can assure you that the firm intention of leading a better life is, if possible, the strongest of all my motives. I implore you to let me go back to Sceaux, as you have been good enough to promise me through M. de la Billarderie. He will tell you about the condition in which he is leaving me. It is certain that I am nigh to perishing. I know that you have never wished my death, and I am certain you wish it less than ever, now that I have put myself entirely at your mercy and given you solid proofs of my repentance and conversion. I take the liberty to beseech you by the promise you gave me that you will pardon those who came into this unfortunate escapade and whom I am obliged to name so as to hide no detail from you. If, contrary to what I think, I have forgotten any point, I implore you to assist my memory. I dare beseech you as earnestly as possible to restore M. du Maine to liberty. I rely on your generosity to put an end to my sufferings. Have pity on me. If I belie my word I am willing to be thrown back for the rest of my life into the most hideous prison. . . .'

The latest biographer of the Duchesse, M. André Maurel, has adequately analysed the confession itself :

' It denies nothing that we know from other sources and clears up many points about which we should otherwise

be in ignorance. One carries away the very clear impression that Mme du Maine lives up to her protestations and shows no sign of wishing to deceive the Regent. No doubt she attenuates her responsibility, but more from shame at her folly than from the childish hope of deceiving him. She admits her negotiations with Spain, and explains without trying to justify them. Certainly justification would have been difficult. Ultimately, when it comes to her accomplices, for the sake of whom she has overcome for weeks her desire for liberty, she finds only two persons to whitewash—Polignac and Malazieu. Laval and Pompadour, Brigault and Rose are, more or less, given away, especially the two first, who, it is true, had the most encouraged her in her dreams, while Malazieu and Polignac were only guilty of too much weakness towards a woman whom they were hardly free to refuse.'

Naturally poor Rose was 'given away.' The Duke, on the other hand, was completely whitewashed. Some people, however, would rather suffer than get off in such a manner :

'I must entirely exonerate M. du Maine, and I care infinitely more about this than about my liberty or my life. He has never known the least thing about these intrigues, which I have hidden from him more than from anyone. I always told him that my business with M. de Laval only concerned matters touching his rank, and before him we both confined our conversation to the affairs of the day without any cabal being mentioned. I told him the same story about M. de Pompadour, and if M. du Maine came into the room when I was speaking about these matters with the gentlemen in question, we would change the

subject. I admit that I rashly told the Spanish ambassador that the King, his master, could be sure of M. du Maine. But I swear I said it on my own responsibility and without ever mentioning the subject to him. I ought to add that M. du Maine more than once forbade me to see MM. de Pompadour and de Laval for fear that they should land me in some intrigues. So in all sincerity I beseech M. le Duc d'Orléans to restore him to liberty after this evidence of his complete innocence ! '

We all know what the absolution was to be—permission to return to Sceaux as soon as possible. ' On with the music, on with the dancing,' the unfortunate experiment with politics shall be quite forgotten. The Duchesse was satisfied, the Duc d'Orléans was triumphant. But this must have been poor consolation for three wretched Breton noblemen who had endeavoured to organize a serious revolt in Brittany and who lost their heads the very day that Mme du Maine pranced back to Sceaux.

The Regent and King George of Hanover and England had triumphed, and the Maines were reduced to the impotence of ridicule. Marshal Berwick promenaded almost without opposition through Castille. Alberoni was in flight. Spain had adhered to the Quadruple Alliance of England, France, Spain and Holland. The 18th century could now pursue its way. The Duchesse du Maine could give as many parties as she liked and the peace of western Europe was secure for a time.

' The Conspiracy of Cellamare ' lacerated the public conscience to a degree that must at first surprise us when we consider its absurd frivolity. Nevertheless it represented an idea which rendered it significant. It was the

last effort of the 17th century, of the Fronde, of the ancient nobility to express their personalities against the encroachments of the executive and the rise of the bourgeoisie and to undo at the eleventh hour the achievement of Richelieu. Herein lay its failure. It was against the spirit of the age and hence found its agent in the inadequate person of Mme du Maine. While it is fitting that the leader of this revolt should be a Condé, it was also fitting that this leader, for all her boasting, should be unworthy. There were troubles enough blowing up for France, troubles to terminate in the French Revolution, a conspiracy of a kind which the Duchesse du Maine would have most heartily disapproved. Nevertheless, in the second part of her career, she will play, all unconsciously, a tiny part in the preparation of this great catastrophe and show herself in her most interesting guise as a link between the 17th and 18th centuries.

II

MME DU MAINE was cured of politics and merely wanted to get back to entertaining; and a husband, though an inconvenience in a conspiracy, is almost a necessity at a party. Great was her joy then when she learned that her husband, on the 29th December, exactly one year after his arrest, had been granted full liberty and was even to be allowed to take up his duties again as Grand Master of Artillery. But he showed no desire that his wife should come and live with him at the Arsenal and he absolutely refused to go back to Sceaux, and stayed on at his mother's house, Clargy. 'I feel I shall not be master in my own house,' he observed. Dislike of his wife and dislike of evening parties were among the most important reasons. He went and called on the Regent, who was sufficiently cold-hearted to observe: 'I don't wish to annoy you, but I cannot help remarking that Mme la Duchesse du Maine has played you a nasty trick.' He was absolutely without a penny, and must have been feeling very bitter at the trouble into which the undegenerate granddaughter of Condé had led him. Perhaps he could keep his peace with the Regent by refusing to live with his wife and thus kill two birds with one stone. Louise-Bénédicte was furious and actually wrote to the Regent to protest against this unlucky separation:

'I flattered myself,' she wrote, 'that you were according me full and complete pardon. I therefore strongly implore you to do so by permitting M. du Maine to come to Sceaux with me and allowing me permission to see you.'

The Regent had no desire to see the Duchesse, but eventually gave way.

'Promise me, at least,' she cried, 'that you will not oppose the re-union of myself and my husband.'

'That depends on you,' he answered. 'I have learned from Sganarelle not to put my finger between the tree and the bark.'

The Duc, however, still refused to come or even speak to his wife, whom he was only tricked into seeing by the young Princesse de Conti. He would have no more to do with her. She had got him into prison, wasted his money, and made his life intolerable. He would give her an allowance and keep away. Alas! It is in vain that the henpecked try late in life to turn into bullies. The Duchesse made such a scene that eventually it was more agreeable to comply.

The Duke began on a lofty note, to collapse before his wife's counter-offensive.

'Mme du Maine,' he observed to somebody else, not to her, 'should restrain her vivacity, observe a modest behaviour, and not surrender herself to the flattering counsels, which have always surrounded her.' . . . And again: 'It is time I make my will felt. Nobody can blame me.' But the Duchesse had an answer ready: 'You will tell the Prince that if in a fortnight our meeting has not been affected I shall go mad on the spot and die of grief. As for him, he is greatly mistaken if he hopes to enjoy a moment's peace so long as he shows towards me such feelings of hate and aversion.'

And then she returned to Sceaux with his two sons and his daughter, and the Duc du Maine had to slink after her.

Mme du Maine did not enjoy her full liberty till the end of 1720; Malazieu could not join her till 1722. Still, he had been fairly happy in prison, having turned his room into a physical laboratory. Such a great man could never rest. The Duchesse was so overcome that she burst into poetry on the occasion:

'Solennisez cet heureux jour,
O Nymphes du Permesse,
Votre Apollon est de retour,
Marquez votre allégresse.
Après avoir gémi longtemps
De sa cruelle absence
Vous devez par de nouveaux chants
Célébrer sa présence.'

Rose de Launay had come back in June, 1720, after one of the most romantic imprisonments on record, still unmarried, though not for lack of offers from her gaolers. Alone of the conspirators she had behaved nobly. She refused to give anyone away, and had only made her 'confession' on the written order of the Duchesse. She arrived at Sceaux in the evening.

'She saw me, stopped my carriage and said: "There you are, Mlle de Launay, I am very glad to see you." I approached, she kissed me, and went on her way.'

Happily Rose could be grateful for small mercies:

'I went into the house and was shown the room which was to be mine. I was delighted to find a window and a chimney, and to learn that there were two more maid-servants, one to replace her who had died, and the other instead of me.'

It was well worth spending eighteen months in prison if the reward was to be a window and fireplace. The Duchesse no doubt thought she had quite thoroughly rewarded the quixotic devotion of her maid. But she was to go even further and embark her on a miserable marriage with M. de Staäl, an unfortunate experiment which ended in her returning once more to Sceaux.

'I love and esteem you more than ever,' wrote Mme du Maine on this occasion, 'and I am not the least surprised by all you have done for me. Your mind and your fidelity were well known to me. You will receive marks of my friendship worthy of your merits as soon as I have the pleasure of seeing you.'

Rose had noticed that there was no one there when she first arrived. The Duc du Maine was not yet brought to heel, and Malazieu not yet at liberty. Further, people were nervous about coming to Sceaux; it might be taken ill in high places, for, politically speaking, the Duchesse was down and out. Bit by bit, however, people perceived that they could sneak back. Philip the Débonnaire, as it was now the fashion to call the Regent, had evidently tired of the whole affair, and everyone could do what they liked so long as they did not bother him.

Fontenelle, half way through his enormous life, was amongst the first to reappear. A newcomer, the President Hainault, lounged through the pleasure gardens, and eventually brought with him his great friend, Mme du Deffand, who was in some ways a difficult companion (her friendship with the Duchesse ended in a quarrel), but who, at any rate, was an intellectual equal for Mme de Staäl. Voltaire, who had once been at Sceaux in the old

days, now turned up in full 18th century glory with Mme du Châtelet in his train. He was hardly an agreeable guest. His great visit was in 1747, and Mme de Staël recounts it to Mme du Deffand.

August 15th, 1747. Mme du Châtelet and Voltaire, who were expected to-day and who had been lost sight of, arrived yesterday at midnight like two spectres, carrying with them a smell of embalmed corpses apparently brought from the tomb. We were leaving table, but the spectres were famished. Supper had to be found for them, and, what was more to the point, beds, which had not been prepared. The concierge, who was already asleep, got up hastily. Gaya, who had offered his room for pressing cases, was forced to give way on this occasion and cleared out with as much precipitation and displeasure as does an army surprised in its camp which leaves part of its equipment in the hands of the enemy. Voltaire was quite satisfied with the bed, which was no consolation for Gaya. But as to the lady, her bed was unsatisfactory. She has had to be moved to-day. You must know she made the bed herself, owing to a shortage of servants, and found the mattress inadequately stuffed. This, I think, wounded her exact mind rather than her far from delicate body. Our new guests are going to get their new comedy rehearsed (*Le Comte de Boursoufle*).

August 16th. Our ghosts put in no appearance by day. They showed themselves at ten in the evening yesterday and I do not think they have been more visible to-day ; one is describing mighty deeds and the other commentating Newton. They will neither play nor walk. They are

absolutely useless in a society which takes no interest in their learned writings. . . .

August 20th. Mme du Châtelet has changed her room for the third time. She could no longer tolerate the one she had chosen. There was a noise and smoke without fire (is not this the symbol of her ?). It is not at night that the noise disturbs her but in the day according to what she says, when she is working her hardest. It deranges her ideas. At present she is engaged on a review of her 'principles,' an exercise she repeats each year, otherwise they might escape and get such a distance off that she would never rediscover a single one of them. I think that her head is rather their prison than their birthplace. They have to be carefully watched. She prefers the fine look of this occupation to all amusements and persists in only appearing at night. Voltaire has written some *vers galants*, which repair a little the ill-effect of the guests' unusual conduct.

August 27th. I told you on Thursday that our ghosts were going the next day, and that the play was to be given in the evening. This has not turned out badly, and one may say that the farce has been well acted. The author ennobled it with a prologue which he played himself, and very well too, along with our Dufour, who, except for the magnificent clothes she wore, could not have stomached being Mme Barbe. She would not submit to the simple garment suitable to her part any more than did the principal actress (Mme du Châtelet), who, also preferring the interests of her appearance to those of the play, appeared on the stage with all the *éclat* and brilliance of a court lady. There was trouble about this with Voltaire, but she is the queen and he the slave. I am very sorry they have gone, though

I was wearied by all her whimsies, which I had to gratify.

It may be worth while to quote an interesting and characteristic note by Swinburne on these amateur theatricals, which makes them appear even more absurd than they do at first sight :

' Having occasion to refer to Mr Carlyle's great prose epic or historic poem [*Frederick the Great*], I am tempted to add here an illustrative note on a curious, if also an insignificant, point. Perhaps one or two other idle students or amateurs of historical or literary *bricabraquologie* (as Balzac would have called it) may be as much amused as I was by the discovery for which I claim so much of credit as is not due rather to sheer accident that the farce acted at Sceaux on Thursday, August the 24th, 1747, before the Duchesse du Maine, was simply a translation or adaptation of the better part of Vanbrugh's *Relapse*, that is of those scenes which belong to the legitimate domain of pure and broad comedy. " What a pity none of us has read this fine farce," ejaculated in 1864 the sardonic historian (vol. 4, page 262). But in the spring of that year the present writer had the inestimable benefit of so doing, in a newly published volume of complementary or supplementary additions to the yet insufficiently voluminous writings of Voltaire ; and had consequently the further advantage of verifying the accuracy of a surmise which could hardly have failed to suggest itself to any lover of the English drama that Voltaire's *Mademoiselle de la Cochonnière*, acted by the translatress of Newton at the girlish age of forty-one, was none other than Miss Hoyden, and Madame Dufour was *Barbe* (Governess Barbara), the representative

of that ideally delightful nurse, who alone is worthy to claim kinship with Juliet's in time past and (may I dare to say it !) even almost perhaps with the incomparable and adorable Mrs Gamp in ages yet to be.'

But to return to Mme de Staël.

August 30th. A good room has been kept for you—the one on which Mme du Châtelet lighted after a careful review of the house. There will be rather less furniture than she put there, for she cleared out all the rooms she passed through to furnish that one. We found six or seven tables there ; she had to have them of all sizes, enormous ones for laying out her papers, solid ones to support her dressing-cases, lighter ones for her knick-knacks and jewels ; and this fine array has not saved her from an accident like that one which befell Philip II when a bottle of ink was upset over the dispatch which he had spent all night writing. The lady did not think of imitating the moderation of this prince. Besides, he had only written on affairs of state ; she had had her algebra smudged, and this is much harder to clear up. The day they left I got a four-page letter with a note in the same package, announcing a grave upset. M. de Voltaire has mislaid his play, forgotten to extract the parts and lost the prologue. I am ordered to find it all and to send the prologue as quickly as possible, not by post *because it would be copied*, to keep the parts for fear of the same accident and to lock up the play under a hundred keys. . . .

12

VOLTAIRE, INDEED, was to be the King of the Second Sceaux. He had fled there originally over an unpleasant incident at the card table of the Duc de Richelieu at Fontainebleau, where the court was in residence. Mme du Châtelet lost a thousand louis, and in endeavouring to get them back a further 84,000 livres. Much agitated, Voltaire cried out in English, a language then universally understood : ' Can't you see you are playing with cheats ? ' Still further alarmed by this indiscretion he sought the hospitality of Sceaux, and for all the spite of Rose de Launay he greatly enjoyed himself there. He reorganized the theatre, and it was there that he wrote *Oreste*, *Semiramis* and *Rome Sauvée* (ominous names suggesting that sham love of antiquity which was to help overthrow society). It was the error of the age to suppose Voltaire a great dramatist, and these plays would not of themselves have brought much additional fame to Sceaux in future ages. But during his two months' seclusion, while Mme du Châtelet negotiated his pardon, Voltaire was seized with a frenzy of composition. In the twilight of the Duchesse's life something important really happened at Sceaux. Voltaire actually wrote there *Babouc*, *Memnon*, *Scarmentado*, *Micromégas* and *Zadig*. At two o'clock in the morning, when everyone was in bed, Voltaire would creep down to the old lady's bedroom and read these perennial trifles to the Duchesse and Rose. It is pleasing to dwell a moment on this scene, and give Louise-

Bénédicte the full credit. She had fed so many stupid people, her swans had been so often geese, she had failed so lamentably in so many enterprises, that one can only be glad to think of *Zadig* being given to the world at Sceaux. He seems to have realized that he had been a success, and he wrote with sublime courtesy when he finally exchanged her house for a better one. 'No one in the world but Frederick the Great could snatch me from the court of Mme du Maine.' Perhaps he would have been happier if he had given up the idea of Potsdam. Perhaps Sceaux would have been intolerable without Mme de Châtelet. Voltaire was never to be really happy again.

As we float through the century Crebillon turns up at Sceaux as a momentary rival to Voltaire, who is now coming mildly into favour again. Finally appears the admirable D'Alembert, to crown the queen of Sceaux with encyclopædic laurels. His father, the Chevalier de la Touche, whom D'Alembert had no particular reason to love, tried to make use of this friendship to manipulate an entrance for himself into Sceaux. The attempt was none too successful. The Chevalier was a despicable poetaster, and Mme du Maine, strong with the flair of a hostess, seemed vaguely to realise that literature had seen its day and that science was now all the rage. Had she only been a little younger, she might have filled the house with test-tubes and coral. Her silly husband, having been a nuisance all his life, had now died too early. For he, too, had always been so fond of science, and the scientists might have been glad of such a patron.

But it was not the object of Mme du Maine merely to satisfy her snobbism by the collection of distinguished

intellectuals. Birth and brain must meet together at Sceaux. The court indeed was closed to her. She was not to make it up with Louis XV till 1737, and refused ever to come to terms with Mme de Pompadour.

For this she has been given credit. But more truly her conduct is absurd. She had got her position by marrying the son of one *maîtresse en titre*. Why be snobbish about meeting another? True, the King visited Sceaux in 1745, but even then the 'Conspiracy of Cellamare' could not be quite forgotten. Short of this she would have everyone at Sceaux. There should be a free and unembarrassed mingling of everything that was best in France round her dinner-table. And it is impossible not to notice that the company was very much better during the second half of her life than during the first. It was the paradox of her existence that she was, despite her feelings and her upbringing, so much happier in the 18th than in the 17th century.

Nevertheless even she was getting old. The Duc du Maine had died in 1736, and she had not pretended to deplore him. Her daughter followed in 1743, and she did not deplore her either. Her sons spent most of their time at the wars and gained some slight distinction, which they apparently owed more to their rank than to their talents. Yet these losses, though little felt, left the Duchesse a solitary old woman. Besides, her court began to fade away. Even Fontenelle got too old to come, Fontenelle, the King of the first court, while Voltaire, the King of the second, had gone off to Potsdam. Mme du Deffand, fired by ambition, had set up a salon of her own in Paris and taken President Hainault along with her. His feelings, as he finally toddled off with his Egeria, were mixed.

'I passed,' he writes, 'twenty years at the court of Sceaux, and during my life there, I experienced the ups and the downs, contradictions and constraints. ... None could have displayed more wit, more good conversation, more badinage or more true politeness, than she did : but none could have been more unjust, more unscrupulous or more tyrannical.'

We must take the wit and the conversation on trust ; after all President Hainault knew the Duchesse du Maine, and we do not. She must have had, at the least, a manner with her that passed for intelligence.

D'Alembert probably could not stand the racket. Finally, in 1747, her great friend the Duchesse d'Estrées, who had passed half her life at Sceaux, died suddenly of an accident. Mme du Maine learned the news with indifference (for she was not an affectionate woman), but her death must have made Sceaux still more gloomy, and at last the Duchesse decided to give up the place and go to Paris to die. Perhaps it would be safer to say that Sceaux abandoned her than that she abandoned Sceaux. In 1751 she installed herself in the Hotel de Moras at the corner of the Rue de Varennes and the Boulevard des Invalides. It is now famous as the Musée Rodin, a charming 18th century house, where delightful parties might have been given had the Duchesse had more spirit or had anyone been willing to come. D'Alembert alone had the heart to console her dying hours. She expired on the 23rd January, 1753, in the seventy-seventh year of her age. She was the last living daughter-in-law of Louis XIV, and died but thirty-six years before the summoning of the States-General. She took the Sacraments 'rapidly' in the presence of D'Alembert.

There was a considerable funeral when, on the 26th of January, her body was transported back to Sceaux to join her husband and Rose de Launay in the grave ; the King wore mourning for three weeks. But very few people followed the coffin. The Duchesse de Parthiène, her niece by marriage, and Mme d'Egmond were chief mourners ; four hundred men in uniform with torches accompanied three carriages and the hearse, which was drawn by eight horses. There was no funeral sermon, and none of her poets thought of writing her epitaph. She just fell flat into the abyss. She had cared for nobody and nobody cared for her. She was a hot-headed fantastic dwarf, who had set everyone by the ears, and had never understood anything, who had left four million francs' worth of debts foolishly incurred, had wrecked her husband's life, and had brought her betters to the scaffold. Why should anyone mourn ? Certainly nobody did. Rose de Launay, poor fool, might have done, but she was dead three years since, and D'Alembert, who was suffering from a slight reaction after his efforts, observed, ' Mme du Maine is dead. Now we can publish the memoirs of Mme de Staäl de Launay.' Perhaps it was the best criticism.

13

AND WHY should anyone care about her now? She was certainly not a nice woman. We have seen her indifference to the death of those who were nearest to her, such as her own daughter and the Duchesse d'Estrées, on which occasion she merely moved her card table to another room. Perhaps she had no reason to deplore the loss of her father and brother, but her mother had tended her interests carefully during her life at Dijon, and she might have loved her a little. Towards her husband she behaved with a brutal egotism. She rewarded the romantic devotion of Rose de Launay with but a fitful notice. During the conspiracy she was agitated only for the fate of Malazieu, who was the one person of whom she seems to have been fond.

She was not really a clever woman. She thought she was a politician, but showed no talent for politics. Despite the eulogy of Rose de Launay we have but little evidence for her conversational brilliance. Her best epigram is, at the most, the reflection of a childish personality. Mme d'Estaing had failed one of her parties, and Mme du Maine was in despair. 'Good gracious,' said Mme du Charost, 'I did not know you cared so much about Mme d'Estaing.' 'I don't care about her in the least. But I should be a happy woman if I could get along without the things I don't care about!' Perhaps the throne of France might be numbered among those things. 'She must sing

at once ! She may be dead before the roast,' she remarked before an ailing lady called in to Sceaux to sing. The observation was no doubt only a joke, but it was hardly the joke of a witty woman. But we need be in no doubt about her character. The 18th century was the great age of 'characters,' and we have three of Mme du Maine, one by Rose de Launay, one by the Duchesse's brother-in-law, the Marquis de Lussay, and one by a court diarist, the Duc de Luynes. They deserve quotation.

Rose writes as follows :

'The Duchesse du Maine, at the age of sixty, has learned nothing from experience ; she is a clever child with the faults and charms of children. Both credulous and inquisitive, she has wished to absorb lessons in all forms of knowledge ; but she has been contented with only the surface of things. The decisions of those who brought her up have become principles and rules for her, about which her mind has never admitted the least doubt ; she submitted herself once and for all. Her provision of ideas is complete ; she would reject the best demonstrated truths and resist the best arguments if they warred with her earliest impressions. Her frivolity permits no serious examination, and doubt is a state her weakness cannot tolerate. Her catechism and the philosophy of Descartes are two systems which suit her equally well.

'Her own idea of herself is a prejudice, and she has simply adopted it like all her other opinions. She believes in herself in the way in which she believes in God and Descartes, without examination and without discussion. Her mirror has been unable to inspire in her any doubts as to the charms of her appearance. The evidence of her own eyes is more

suspect to her than the judgment of those who decided that she was handsome and had a good figure. Her vanity is of a curious kind, but it seems the less shocking for not being deliberate, though to be sure that makes it all the more absurd.

'Dealings with her are pure slavery; her tyranny is undisguised; she does not deign to colour it with the appearance of friendship. . . . I have seen her learn with indifference the deaths of those for whom she shed tears when they were a quarter of an hour late for a card party or an excursion. . . . One can have no conversation with her. She does not care about being understood; she only wants to be listened to. . . . She caused a witty person to say of her that "princes were in ethics what monsters were in physics. One sees openly in them the greater part of those vices which are imperceptible in other men." She says elsewhere, in a letter to Mme du Deffand, "The great, by force of expansion, become so thin that we can see the daylight through them."'

Lussay says the same thing more harshly:

'The body and mind of the Duchesse du Maine are of the same order. They are both on the scale of a child of twelve, and although she is now twenty-nine (1705), she is still a child, a very clever one certainly, but spoilt like all children who have never been corrected and have had all their whims gratified till they become intolerable. She follows her desires which are quick and lively, knowing neither duty nor decent behaviour, and without ever worrying about consequences. She cares for nothing in the world but the moment's pleasure, and only likes people in so far as they can contribute to it. She weeps

and laughs, grows wretched and cheerful again in the same moment ; in a word, she is a child of twelve. . . .'

According to Lussay she was entirely under the influence of Malazieu, and did nothing but repeat his opinions like a parrot, but of this we may be doubtful.

The Duc de Luynes, however, with the reverence of those who live at court and respect royalty, takes her more seriously, and his obituary notice gives her a little credit.

'She was always complaining, now of a cold, now of eye-trouble, but she was fundamentally healthy, though her shape would not lead one to expect it. For two years she had certainly had poor health, and she finally died of a chill which she could not spit up. One may say of her that she had a superior and universal intelligence, a chest of singular strength and an admirable flow of speech. She had studied the most abstract sciences—philosophy, physics and astronomy. She spoke of them all with familiarity and in choice terms. She had a high strong voice, and she could keep up a conversation for three or four hours without seeming tired. She equally enjoyed novels and anything frivolous. She always showed a decided passion for amusements. She loved people to give parties, and used to give them herself, and her taste for them continued till the end. I think I have already said that she had furnished several houses and used them from time to time. She always took a numerous suite along with her, and she gambled everywhere, for a long time at biribi and then at cavagnole.

'The company she kept was mixed—clever people for conversation, and others for cards, old acquaintances and

friends of every period, distinguished people who from time to time paid her their respects, and others, less important, to whom she had grown accustomed. She was extremely polite, and received with attention, and even with distinction, the men and women who came to see her. She had a great supper every day, and people asserted that the food was not good. Her own was always excellent, but for many years she had eaten alone. She had adopted this regime for her health's sake. For a long time she lived on chicken and wished to have it always ready. Her servants had always one on the spit so that it should be as nice as possible. And one day the sixth chicken was being prepared before she asked for her supper. But she usually had her meal at about half-past five. She began dressing at three. This was the time of day when she most liked talking. She took a great time dressing. The Duchesse du Maine thought much about her appearance and used a prodigious quantity of rouge. . . .'

The Duc de Luynes is certainly the most favourable witness for Louise-Bénédicte. But somehow the rouge is more convincing than anything else.

14

WHY INDEED BOTHER about this opinionated dwarf? Has she any real interest except as a freak? In truth she has. Destiny often chooses strange and unworthy instruments to fulfil her designs, and one of the strangest of those instruments was the granddaughter of the Great Condé who died almost in the arms of D'Alembert. Perhaps by the mere fact of living she became a link between Louis XIV and the Revolution. In the first half of her life she schemed for power, lived on a vague notion of her ancestors, flamed into a moment's life the dying embers of the Fronde, and paid the penalty with a year's imprisonment. Yet she was not suited for this task, for she too, like the Regent, George I and Dubois, belonged to the 18th century. Frivolous, worldly, irreligious and chaste, she had nothing to do with the sins and sacrifice of Feudalism and Port Royal. It is after her life's failure that she became effective, though she understood the Encyclopædia neither better nor worse than she understood the catechism. In her second reign at Sceaux her attempt to get the aristocracy of birth and brain to mingle agreeably in social converse had a fair measure of success. And her effort was more significant than she realised. The breaking down of caste which was to be the history of the 18th century almost began at Sceaux. There the leaders of thought met on independent terms the privileged classes. Not that previously they had not lived on terms of familiarity with the great. No one could

have been more free-and-easy and less condescending than Louis XIV with the great men of his age. 'Je ne peux me passer de Baptiste,' he remarked quite naturally at a critical moment in the career of Lulli. Still, at Versailles the great men served a purpose. They added to the glory of the State even more than to the glory of the monarch personally, for vanity hardly played a part in the pride of Louis, and to the glory of the great family of twenty million Frenchmen of whom Louis was the devoted father. At Sceaux the 18th century writers came into their own, disintegrating the State, assisting the bourgeoisie in their rapid rise, controlled by no discipline save that of their own intellectual integrity. The pleasure grounds of Sceaux played their part in destroying the aristocracy's faith in itself, which was to render the classes of privilege helpless before the inrush of the third estate.

Naturally Mme du Maine understood none of these things, and had she done so she must have instantly disapproved of them. She would have again become a Condé, and perhaps have sought a position of command in the White Army. Still she was one of the first of those modern hostesses who have a passion for being surrounded by people whom they are quite unable to understand and take an inordinate pleasure in snubbing the great, who in turn appear to like nothing so much as to be snubbed. In the course of the 18th century conspiracy moved from the court to the drawing-room on its way to the 19th century *estaminet*; and Louise-Bénédicte, having failed in the court, tripped merrily off to the drawing-room, though she certainly did not know what she was doing. She is almost unique in that, having failed as the

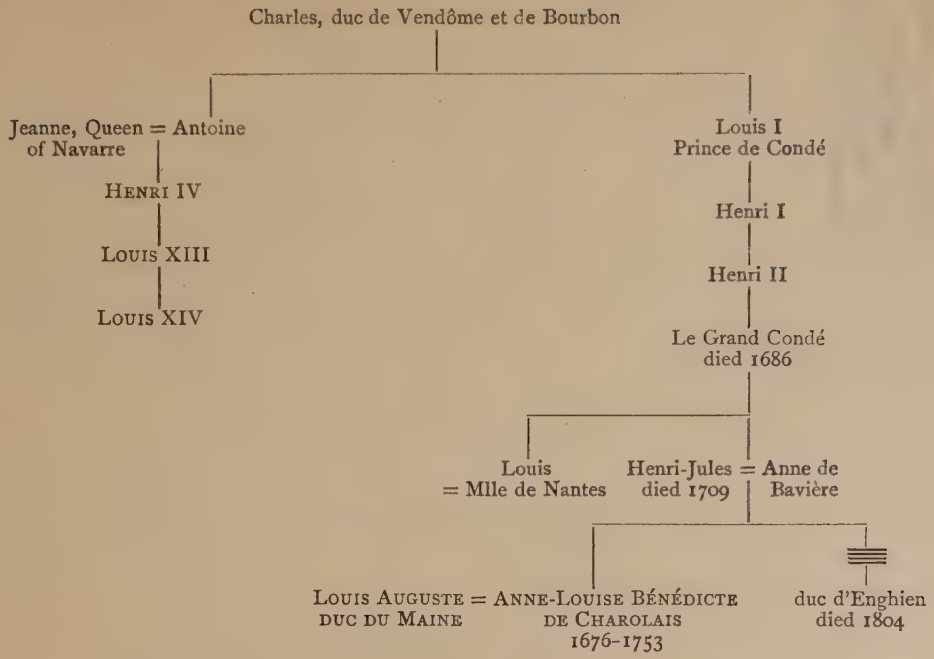
last representative of the old order, she became a leader of the modern movement. It was correct that she should be born in the palace of the Condés, and perfect that she should die in the arms of D'Alembert.

The philosophers were as ungrateful to her in her death as she had ever been in her life. Not an elegy, not an epitaph came from that band of facile versifiers and writers of epigrams. Yet had they wished, they could have summed her up in a phrase:

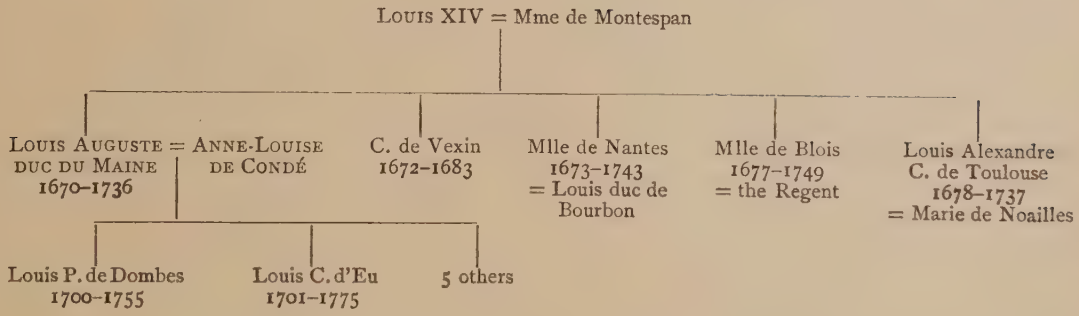
'Ci-gît une femme qui a tout fait, sans avoir rien compris.'

Her confusion was due to the fact that she made a mistake about herself very rare in the history of the world. Most people think they are very advanced, when they are in truth very old-fashioned. The Duchesse thought herself very old-fashioned, when she was in truth rather advanced.

THE CONDÉ FAMILY

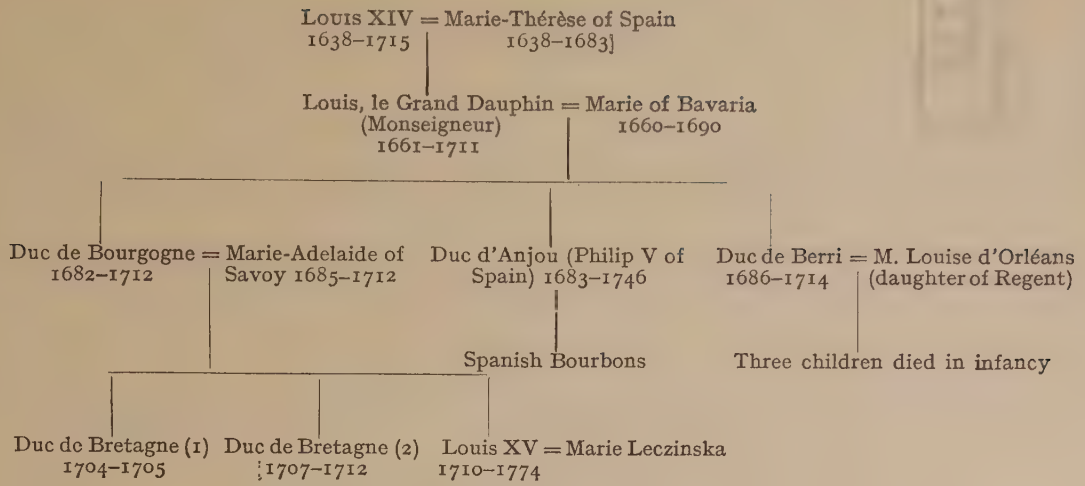


ILLEGITIMATE FAMILY OF LOUIS XIV


Louis XIV = Mme de Montespan
Louis Auguste duc du Maine 1670–1736
= Anne-Louise de Condé
C. de Vexin 1672–1683
Mlle de Nantes 1673–1743 = Louis duc de Bourbon
Mlle de Blois 1677–1749 = the Regent
Louis Alexandre C. de Toulouse 1678–1737 = Marie de Noailles
Louis P. de Dombes 1700–1755
Louis C. d'Eu 1701–1775
5 others

Note—The Regent was Philippe duc d'Orléans, nephew of Louis XIV and great-great-grandfather of Louis Philippe, King of the French.

THE BOURBON LINE


Louis XIV = Marie-Thérèse of Spain
1638–1715 1638–1683
Louis, le Grand Dauphin = Marie of Bavaria
(Monseigneur) 1660–1690
1661–1711
Duc de Bourgogne = Marie-Adelaide of Savoy 1685–1712
1682–1712
Duc d'Anjou (Philip V of Spain) 1683–1746
Duc de Berri = M. Louise d'Orléans
1686–1714 (daughter of Regent)
Spanish Bourbons
Three children died in infancy
Duc de Bretagne (1) 1704–1705
Duc de Bretagne (2) 1707–1712
Louis XV = Marie Leczinska
1710–1774

NOTE

The main sources for the life of the Duchesse du Maine are the Memoirs of Saint Simon, Mme de Staäl, President Hainault, and the letters of Mme de Maintenon, Mme Palatine, Mme du Deffand, Mme de Staäl, Voltaire, though it would be possible to multiply 'authorities' almost indefinitely.

There are two excellent short studies of Mme du Maine by Sainte-Beuve (*Causerie du Lundi*, vol. 3), and Mme Arvède Barine (*Princesses et Grandes Dames*).

For the main outline of Mme du Maine's career I am greatly indebted to the excellent life of her by General Piépape (Plon 1910). But for any errors of interpretation I am myself entirely responsible.

M. André Maurel (Hachette 1928) quotes some interesting new documents.

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